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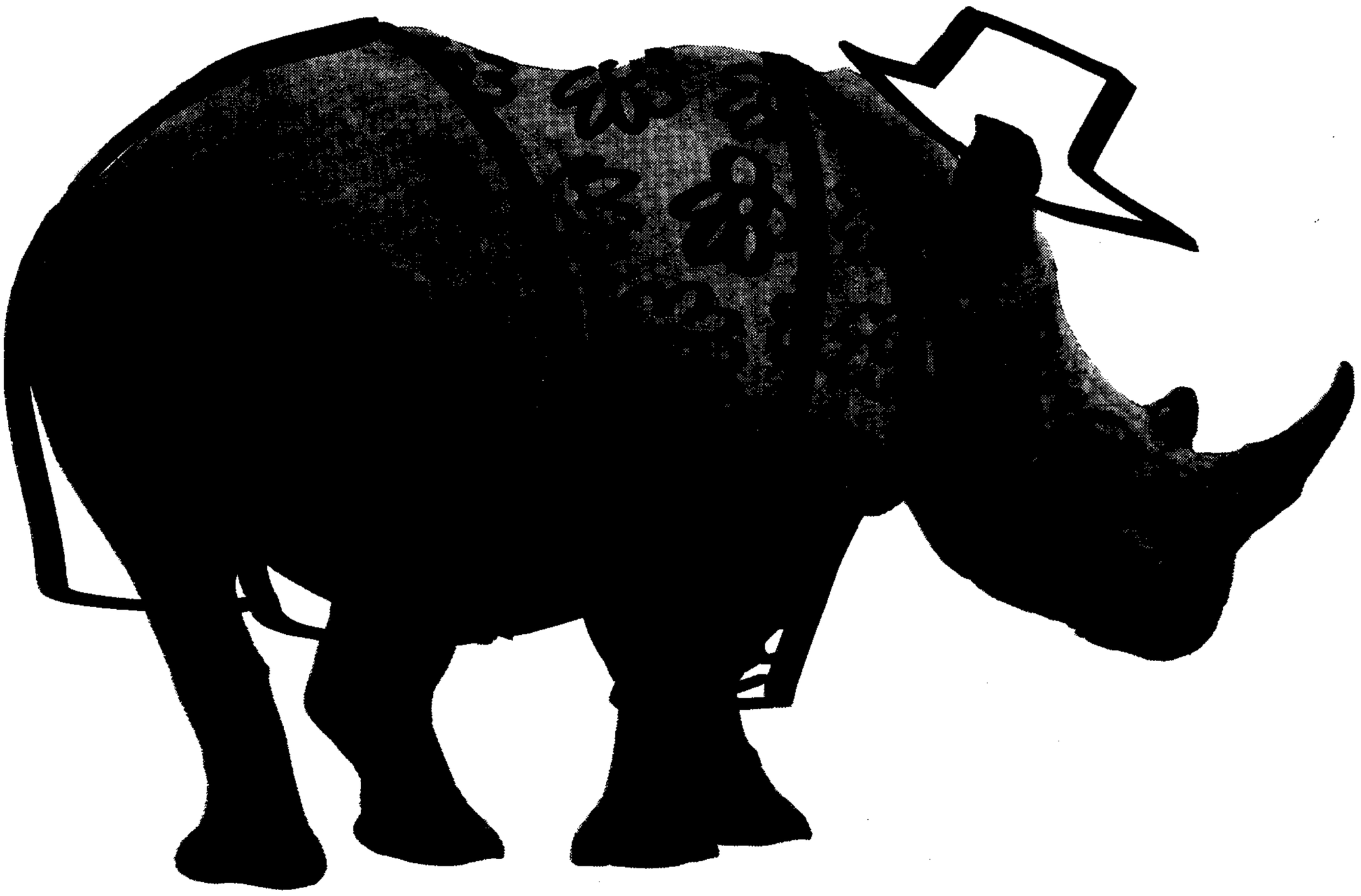

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**Wanga-Wonga.** Noun. (*Colloquial*). Native New Guinean slang for biro. Also applied to pencils and felt tip pens in some regions.

WARNING This term should not be addressed to an adolescent female as it is considered extremely offensive.

EXAMPLE "Your sister is a real wanga-wonga."

**Dixyl.** Noun. (*Cyberslang*). Inverted pixel which occurs in some software programmes during upgrading from 150 to 350 super Roms on 1998/1999 generation Megadiscs. (See also gobblegeek, internerd, Stram and Von Bulow).

**Dictionary.** Noun. (*American English*). Book full of meaningless words with ridiculous definitions. Derived from the Latin:

Dictio = to rip off

Tionary = money from gullible members of the public.

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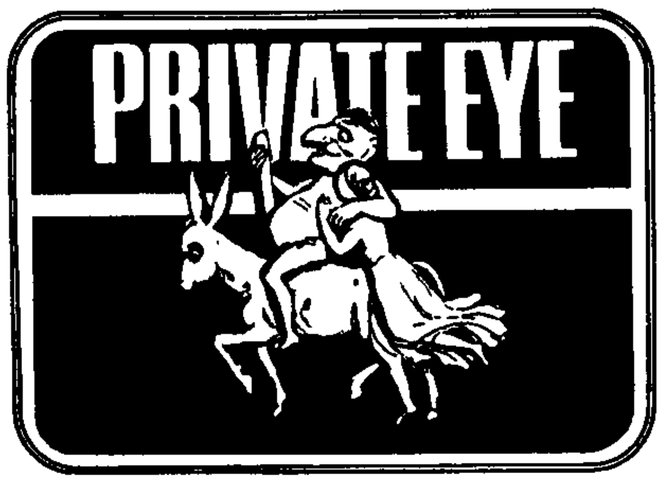


# COLOUR SECTION

**LAST week the *Guardian* reported excitedly that a new campaign for early British entry into the single currency, "Unions for Europe", was to be launched to coincide with the TUC conference later this month.**

The campaign, according to an insider, could call on the support of pro-EMU general secretaries, John Edmonds of the GMB and Sir Ken Jackson of the AEEU. The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, was, according to a well-placed source a "friend of the unions, pro-Europe" and someone "with whom they could do business".

But not everyone was delighted with the Brothers' new initiative. Least of all the TUC, which despite the pro-European leanings of John Monks, has walked a delicate tightrope, mindful that TUC big guns such as the T&GWU and the mighty Unison public sector union are implacably against joining up. "What the f**k is going on?" demanded Monks's deputy, Lord Lea, as he ferociously scanned the newspapers, before demanding to know who was behind the bouncing operation. The AEEU's Sir Ken Jackson said he had never heard of "Unions for Europe" — as well he might, for there was indeed no such organisation.

One of the people behind the attempt to rush the TUC's high command on the issue, which blew a hole through its carefully crafted unity, was Daniel Hodges, new head of communications at the GMB. He is the son of Glenda Jackson, and arrived at the GMB's Wimbledon HQ after a spell working for Steve Norris's Road Haulage Federation while mummy was a transport minister. Although young Daniel is a man in a hurry, he may find he has bitten off more than he can chew.

---

**JACK STRAW'S announcement that he is to introduce new rules about counting crime — which will have the unfortunate side-effect of making the levels of recorded offences shoot up by 20 per cent – was intended to make the Home Secretary appear open and efficient.**

In fact it has nothing to with mere statistical efficiency and everything to do with trying to dig his way out of the mighty scandal – exposed by the *Guardian* in March – whereby almost every police force in the country has for years been routinely fiddling the figures. Police as a matter of course log stolen purses as "lost property"; record attempted burglaries as broken windows; and visit young offenders in prison and give them a day out with their girlfriends if they agree to "write off" dozens of crimes they know nothing about – all so that Inspector Knacker can claim a better clear-up rate. Victims of crime, meanwhile, do not get justice and the real perpetrators of thousands of offences go free.

The scandal was finally brought out into the open by Det Supt Peter Coles of Nottinghamshire police, who was so outraged by the trickery and deceit – all of it carried out in order to bring greater glory to chief constables and home secretaries – that he filed a formal complaint against his own chief constable, Colin Bailey. The subsequent inquiry, by the chief constable of Bedfordshire, Michael O'Byrne, uncovered a horrifying mass of fraud. O'Byrne's report was scathing, although the fact that it was not published enabled Notts police to suggest that the force had been cleared – another gross distortion of the truth.

When the Home Office bureaucrats responsible for gathering crime figures realised how they had been conned for years by most of the police forces in the UK about the true extent of crime, they were furious. And that is why Saint Jack has had to change the rules. Although, of course, he is not about to tell anyone that.

**THE chief executive of Scotland's biggest PR company Beattie Media, wrote to first minister Donald Dewar on 25 August advocating new rules governing the lobbying industry in Scotland to prevent Drapergate-style scandals.**

"Dear Donald," wrote Gordon Beattie, "the lobbying industry in Scotland is in its infancy and so far we have been unaffected by unprofessionalism or sleaze. I hope it continues that way.

"To ensure it does, I believe our MSPs need to look at the sector and consider the introduction of legislation or an official code of conduct."

Gordon Beattie favours official legislation over self-regulation to the extent that Beattie Media has refused to sign up to the anti-sleaze charters of two of the main professional bodies representing PR firms in Scotland. These are the Public Relations Consultants' Association (PRCA) and the Association for Scottish Public Affairs (ASPA).

Beattie told the *Herald* newspaper: "I don't have much respect for the other PR firms who make up the PRCA" and reasoned that he didn't want to join the ASPA because "it's code is not stringent enough".

Considering the number of Scottish public sector accounts held by Beattie, including Scottish Enterprise and West of Scotland water, Dewar should pay particular attention to the firm's head of public affairs Kevin Reid – son of Scottish Secretary John Reid.

---

**GUESS WHAT is at the top of the list for the Turkish planning department after the mass destruction caused by last month's earthquake... a nuclear power station.**

On 15 October the government will announce which of three international consortia has won the bid to build a reactor in the region of Akkuyu.

The bidders include US firm Westinghouse, recently acquired by British Nuclear Fuels in conjunction with another US firm Morris Knudsen (see *Eye* 983).

Despite the advice of the International Atomic Energy Agency that reactors should not be built near active faults, Akkuyu is only 13 miles west of the Ecemis fault line. Although not involved in last month's quake, it is capable, say seismologists, of producing tremors measuring eight on the Richter scale.

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# Street Of Shame

**"LAST YEAR the Princess was in the newspapers all the time," Earl Spencer told the *Guardian* last week. "It hasn't been like that this year". Editors the length of the Street of Shame rushed to agree, noting solemnly that the only thing that sells papers like stories about Diana, is stories about how there are no stories about Diana any more.**

"FORGOTTEN" was the *Mirror*'s headline on 3 August, above a picture of a vaguely familiar blonde woman. "Now it is almost as if she had never existed," the paper claimed, with editor Piers Moron concluding with brilliant logic that the absence of crowds at either Althorp or Kensington Palace obviously meant that the People desperately wanted a site at which to pay homage to their Princess. Shockingly, there was still no statue on the 4, 6, 13, 25or 31 August, despite the best efforts of *Mirror* front pages devoted to Princess What-was-her-name-again on all those days. Over at the *Daily Mail* she had slipped people's minds even further – they only managed to get two front pages out of the forgotten phenomenon in a week, detailing "Diana's Despair" (in a four-part series), and calling in no less a figure than John Humphrys to muse upon "What the Diana phenomenon can tell us about ourselves".

The *Daily Telegraph* held their own service of remembrance on 19 August, as Robert Hardman bemoaned the fact that "Diana is still not allowed to rest in peace". And her slumber probably wasn't helped by the deadly duo in the paper the next day: "Julie Burchill and W F Deedes discuss Diana, Princess of Wales". She was exhumed again by the following day's *Telegraph* for an exclusive feature: "Dressing Diana".

On 25 August the *Guardian* entered the fray. "Two years on, the Princess of Wales is almost forgotten", wrote Jonathan Freedland, keeping the candle flame alight with a large picture of Di on the front page. And over in the *Evening Standard* two days later Brian Sewell was at it, too, detailing "The Diana we forget" – presumably that would be the Diana who Sewell wrote off as "medallion woman" in the same paper not long after her death.

It was hardly surprising that by the time the second anniversary of her death arrived on 31 August, the *Mirror* had executed a swift turnaround – their editorial column that day claimed that "The immediate pain has passed... yet she is far from forgotten." Except, it would seem, in one paper. The *Daily Mail*, which has hitherto never missed a chance to squeeze its readers' tear ducts, was strangely reticent on the actual anniversary of Diana's death, only noting it in passing. Could this reticence perhaps have anything to do with their purchase of James "The Cad" Hewitt's story, along with the contents of 64 love letters from the Princess, revealed in other papers the previous weekend?

**THE *Guardian* was quick to take the moral high ground at the news that the *Big Issue* magazine was to carry adverts for Nescafe, produced by the multinational processed foods company Nestle.**

The magazine had previously supported and carried adverts for the pressure group Baby Milk Action, which pointed out the aggressive promotion of Nestle baby milk in the third world and linked it to a daily baby death rate of 4,000 due to inadequate nutrition.

"The *Big Issue*, faced with a £42,000 cheque, have adopted a pragmatic approach," Simon Bowers recorded in the paper's diary, before encouraging readers to write to the magazine to complain.

While they are at it, they might want to drop a line to Bowers' colleague Nicholas Bannister, who was quite happy to plug the company in the paper's editorial copy only weeks before. Over half a page his fawning "Brand Values" profile of Nescafe on the paper's finance pages waxed lyrical on such vital issues as the "continental coffee taste" and the "technological skills" of Nestle, but strangely Bannister seemed to run out of space before he could get on to the whole dead babies issue.

**IN THE last issue of the *Eye* we noted the discrepancy in the *Times*'s coverage of Prince William passing his driving test and wondered whether St James's Palace was the source of this misinformation.**

The *Thunderer* reported that Wills "took the test in a silver Ford Focus in Cirencester, Wiltshire".

Of course the *Times* was wrong on two counts. Not only is there not and never has been a driving test centre in Cirencester, there is not and never has been a Cirencester in Wiltshire, although there is one in Gloucestershire.

## OH, YEAH?

"Literary detectives have found evidence that Shakespeare was Prince William's ancestor, *write Nicholas Hellen and Caroline Gascoigne.*

— *Sunday Times*, 22 August

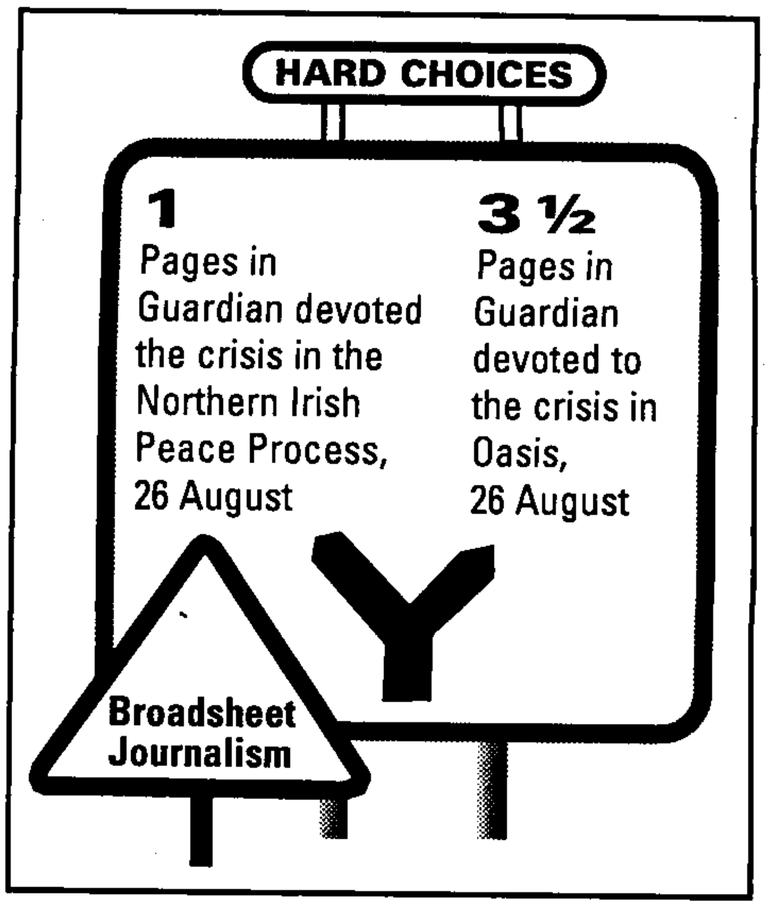
**THE relaunch of *Penthouse*, whose stock market flotation has been a disaster and is now the subject of a department of trade investigation, was a sleazy affair even by porn standards.**

The UK magazine, owned by the Guccione family, has been franchised to an offshore company called Lancaster Publications. Its boss, former *Express* managing director Andrew Cameron, hopes to get rich from floating *Penthouse*. But financial regulators are crawling all over the prospectus.

Cameron and his fellow pornographers tried to impress potential investors at a private party. This consisted of a buxom table dancer called Hannah Tallow, who has posed for the *Sunday Sport*, and her younger sister strutting their stuff at the home of a Lancaster director.

▶ ***RESIGN AGAIN*** Now that Ron Davies has resigned from a key post in the assembly and resigned as Welsh Secretary of State, he should now be a man of character and resign as an MP and Welsh Assembly member. Having done this he could have time to recuperate and, when the illness has gone, restart his career in the pubic or private sector.

*Letter to South Wales Echo*


HARD CHOICES
1
Pages in Guardian devoted the crisis in the Northern Irish Peace Process, 26 August
3 ½
Pages in Guardian devoted to the crisis in Oasis, 26 August
Broadsheet Journalism

**THE environmental campaigning group Earth First were naturally interested when Jo, a "committed environmental and anti-corporation activist", e-mailed to ask how she could get involved in future direct action campaigns such as J18, which she "really enjoyed".**

Particularly intriguing was the hotmail address that "Jo" sent her request from: "Jonathan Ungoed-Thomas" at joth99@hotmail.com. Could Jo be somehow related to Jonathan Ungoed-Thomas of the Sunday Times, whose recent work has included a searing exposé on how "J18 activists" have become "cyber-terrorists", "trained in hacking techniques to attack the computer networks of banks and financial institutions"?

Surprising, isn't it, that a journalist so well-versed in infowar didn't realise that creating a fake email account involves putting a false name in the sign-up form? Still, he is learning. Previous Ungoed-Thomas pleas have come from "Laura", who contacted eco-advocate George Monbiot offering her assistance as a "committed anti-corporatist". That time, the canny Laura e-mailed her kind offer directly from Jonathan.Ungoed-Thomas@sundaytimes.co.uk.

Jonathan – get out of the building! Those cyber-terrorists are IN THE ROOM WITH YOU!

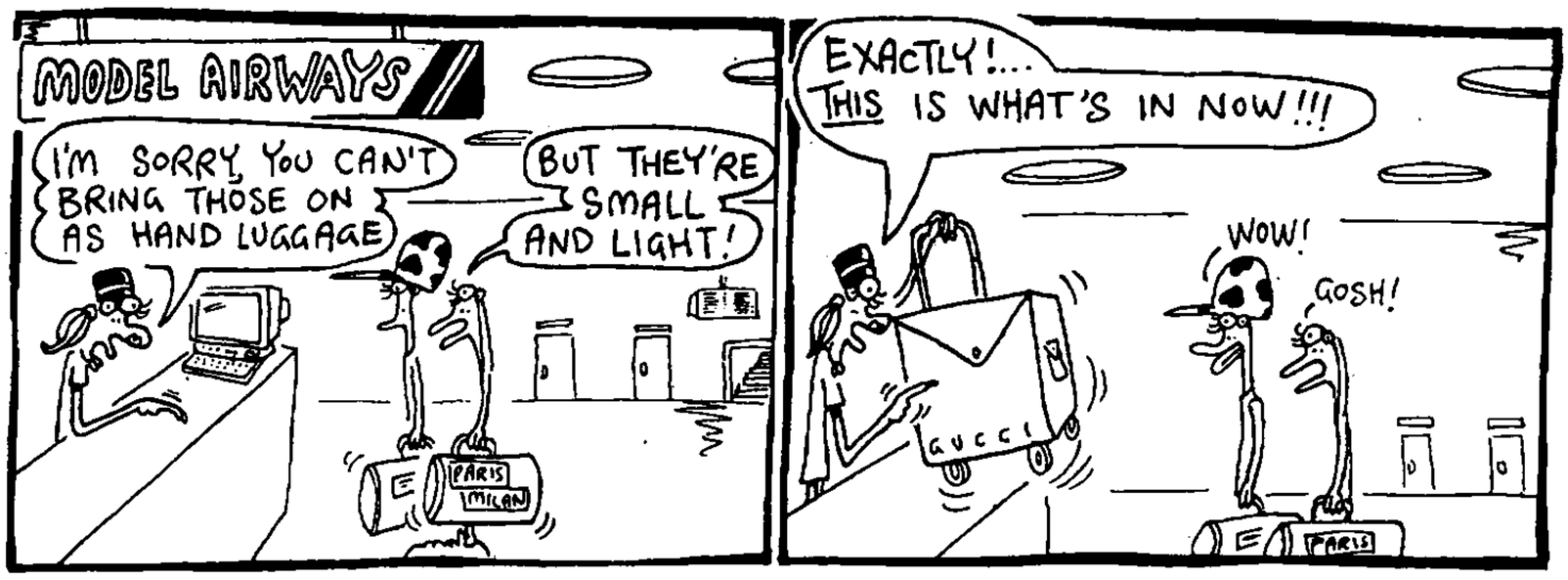
**HACKS at the Independent took an unusual interest in the restaurant column in the September issue of GQ magazine, for it was written by their editor, Simon "Pussy" Kelner.**

Readers were spared the sight of Kelner's mighty paunch, for the review was illustrated with a line drawing in which portly Pussy appeared to have shed about three stone. *Indie* staff were most amused, however, by the fact that the GQ artist had portrayed Pussy wearing Seventies-style flared trousers and a kipper tie: "metaphorically spot-on", said one.

Not sharing in the general hilarity was Karen Kelner, Mrs Pussy, who works on the *Indie*'s picture desk. Pussy's GQ assignment had been to choose the ideal woman with whom he would wish to spend his final meal on earth. Like a shot, of course, he chose... the actress Rachel Weisz.

## SUPERMODELS

KERBER



## DOPE UPDATE

**DRUGS "Czar" Keith Hellawell and Prince Charles's *Business in the Community* charity, which have joined forces to form a "Partnership against Drugs" appear ignorant of the interest some of their partners have in the drugs industry.**

Whitbread Brewers have stated in their "Executive Guide" that illegal narcotics are a threat to the profits made by legal drugs such as alcohol: "Up to £10bn per annum of consumer spending is estimated to be diverted from legitimate goods."

Is it to combat this perceived competition that Whitbread launched an alco-pop drink specifically aimed at younger drinkers named "Wild Brew"?

For two years running the alcohol industry self-regulating body the Portman group has upheld complaints against the packaging on the Wild Brew bottle which features leafy shapes bearing an uncanny resemblance to, er, the marijuana plant.

## SEEDY BUSINESS

**AT THIS month's Glee gardening show at Birmingham's NEC Suttons Seeds will announce the extension of their Seed Squad range for children which has enjoyed huge success since its launch last September.**

The Seed Squad are not the only flower-based cartoon characters on show at Glee. Pauline Earle will also be appearing with her Petal People launched in 1995.

At last year's Glee French company Royal Fleur broke off negotiations with Pauline for a contract worth £6,000 mistakenly claiming that she had already sold her characters to Suttons.

The names and designs are slightly different, but there are still strong similarities in appearance and personality traits, for example Suttons Nutty Nasturtium looks like Pauline's Busy Lizzie and both are fanatical runners, while Sunny Sunflower strongly resembles the Petal People character Susie Sunflower. Suttons of course deny any similarity.

Could there have been some accidental cross-fertilisation between the Seed Squad and the Petal People, by any chance?

*"Look kids a Has-been-fish"*

Tina Brown is a brilliant ambassador for Britain — indeed it was once speculated that she and her husband Harold Evans might jointly take over from a departing ambassador to Washington. She is one of our finest exports. Rule Brit Tina!

**GABRIELLE MORRIS**
**Guardian**

***£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.***

# HACKWATCH

## Murdoch and the Beeb

**THE BEST efforts of the *Times* and *Sun* failed to prevent Greg Dyke from becoming the BBC's new director-general, and the valiant efforts of the *Sunday Times* failed to make anyone take the idea of Andrew Neill in the job remotely seriously. But the reaction of Rupert Murdoch's newspapers to the proposed minimal (and temporary) hike in the digital licence fee should convince the new man in Portland Place that while he may have won the battle, the war is far from over...**

**11 July:** The *Sunday Times*' "Atticus" column reveals that the new Dyke is nothing but a foul-mouthed slob — at his welcome party he "shocked sensitive souls with a short talk punctuated with four letter words". Well, don't say they didn't try to warn you.... Meanwhile John Jay has some words of advice for the new boy: "With the licence seen as a poll tax, let us turn it into a voluntary subscription business."

**16 July:** Things are beginning to fall apart. In the *Times*'s media diary, Maggie Brown reveals that "post-mortems have been taking place over the last few days at BBC news over its bungled coverage during the weekend when Nato troops went into Kosovo.... BBC chiefs agree that after a good start to the war they were outclassed by the nimbler Sky News and ITN". Doh!

**25 July:** It seems Dyke has heeded Jay's warning — "One of Dyke's ideas is particularly intriguing: the BBC should be funded by subscription," Richard Brooks tells *Sunday Times* readers. "Dyke has privately told chums in commercial television that he sees subscription as the most viable way of funding the BBC." Or was it the head of another media operation that said that?

**3 August:** Des Lynam is leaving the Beeb. "Will last person to leave the BBC please switch off the television," requests the *Sun*, listing the "string of top stars to desert the corporation". They include such big names and timely examples as "Sybil Ruscoe", "Clive James.... four years ago", and "*Casualty* star Jonathan Kerrigan, who played gay nurse Sam". And according to the paper's editorial column, "Des's departure is just a sign of the times". What times would these be? Times when rumours abound of a forthcoming "TV poll tax". As the column so rightly points out, "as the BBC's share of viewing drops, its demands for money – YOUR money – soars". And boy, is that share dropping. Why, BBC 1 only gets five times as many viewers as Sky One these days...

**6 August:** The rumours were true. The extra licence fee- or, as the *Sun* prefers to refer to it, the "controversial digi-tax" — is proposed. The paper promptly berates the BBC for pumping "thousands of pounds into telly programmes which failed to catch on with viewers". Their own boss, however, wouldn't dream of such wasteful investment. Just ask Chris Evans, to whom Sky gave at least £3m so that they could broadcast his radio breakfast show live on Sky One – and then dropped him in a matter of months when it turned out not to make terribly interesting viewing. Nonetheless, the paper's editorial column decided it was time to "State some facts: Our parent company, News Corporation, bet the ranch on Sky – the entire company's future rested on its success. In the process, millions of Brits were given more choice, 24-hour news, the best movies and the best in sports. In fact, English football has been transformed. Now, a few years later, Sky Digital customers are to be asked to pay £24 to help its main rival, the BBC, catch up. What sort of a country is this?"

**8 August:** Only one man has the cultural gravitas to answer such a profound question: it is time to bring in Bryan Appleyard. In the *Sunday Times* he is at his pseudiest: "Des is – was – an aspect of the still faintly beating Reithian heart of the BBC. He is England as she dreams of being... Magically, we recognised Des for what he was: a work of art, an individual artefact embodying a universal truth, a private project that becomes a public good." At breakfast tables across the nation, grown men are seen to cry. First we lost the empire, now Des.

Meanwhile, in the news pages, another rat has jumped what can now only be seen as a sinking ship. "The face of BBC entertainment, Noel Edmonds, is to leave the corporation after 30 years because he has lost faith in its ability to make quality programmes". The corporation no longer lives up to the Reithian ideals of the man who gave us Mr Blobby and the World of the Secret Camera, it would seem.

**11 August:** The *Times* reports that "Harry Enfield has become the latest star to leave the BBC. The comedian has signed a £1m deal with BskyB", while the *Sun* follows through with "Comic Enfield leaves the Beeb in £1m deal". The only problem being that Enfield hasn't — his last show was something called *St Albion's* on, er, ITV.

**13 August:** "Black Sky Hits Beeb" shouts the *Sun*. "Jubilant bosses at the satellite giant" are delighted that Sky has the rights to screen *The Blackadder History* for the Millennium Dome. A *Sun* "Exclusive" by Christine Smith tells how the BBC was "sidelined by a £4m deal". Which would presumably be the deal struck last April, when it was announced that "The film is a joint venture between the BBC, the independent production company Tiger Aspect and BSkyB, which is sponsoring the Dome entertainment zone." And yes, Smith has to admit, "the Beeb will screen the film" too — when the bulk of its total audience actually get to see it.

**15 August:** "The BBC showed a total of THIRTY-FIVE repeats on a single day, a *News of the World* investigation has revealed." Quite how many of the *Screws*' crack sleuths were required to go through a copy of the *Radio Times* ringing the little "R" symbol is not disclosed, but the paper does find room for the views of "furious Ian Falconer, of Hamilton, Lancashire". His conclusion? "They have a nerve asking for more money." Strangely, he doesn't seem to object to Sky One, a channel almost entirely devoted to re-hashing shows that have been on before — often at least once in the same day.

**19 August:** "OFFICIAL: BBC'S LOST THE PLOT". The plot of *EastEnders*, that is. The *Sun* claims to have obtained "telly's most sensational secret", a dossier detailing the plans for Britain's favourite soap — no, not Sky's *Dream Team*, but the BBC's *EastEnders*, which has "lost the plot" to the tune of 18 million viewers – around 24 times as much as Sky gets for any drama series. The *Sun* asks the big question: "Do you want us to reveal all?"

**21 August:** Once again, David Yelland has judged the readers' mood perfectly: "We gave them back after *Sun* readers begged us NOT to publish them... A total of 10,327 voted for us to return the bombshell scripts to the Beeb – against 6,457 who said we should publish."

**23 August:** Final word must go to Garry Bushell, who has seen the future of Albert Square. "*EastEnders* remains a libel on Londoners – populated entirely by losers, half-wits and the morally incontinent." Oddly, this is a spot-on depiction of one particular fortified compound and newspaper empire's HQ in the heart of London's East End.

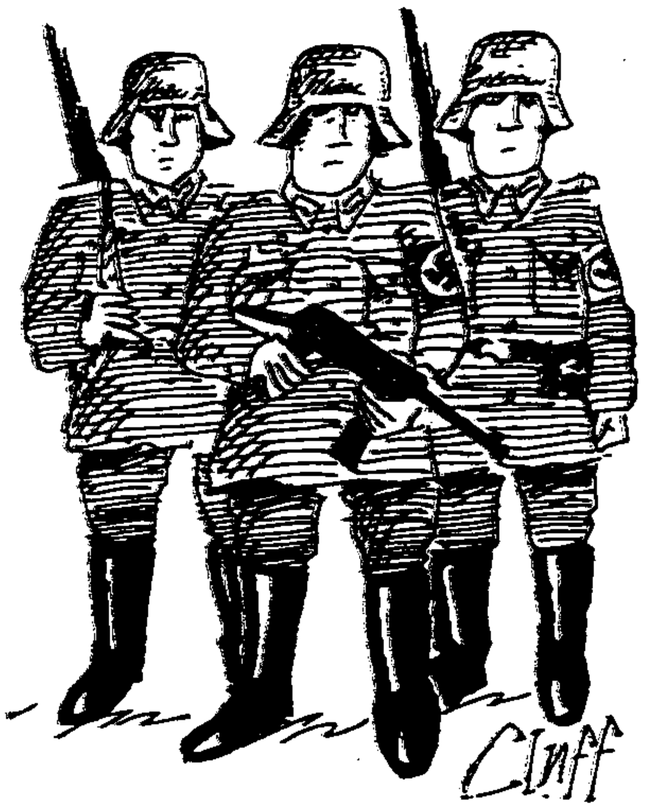
## Number crunchings

**£2** per month

PROPOSED cost of watching all BBC digital channels which Murdoch papers think is "scandalous".

**£32** per month

COST of watching all Sky digital channels which Murdoch papers think is a good deal.




**Ford Escort circa 1940**

# IN THE TEAROOM

**HELL hath no fury like a Prescott scorned. The much-patronised deputy leader of the Labour Party has had enough. Having last month contemplated a shock resignation, while telling others that he was "disillusioned with politics", the Mouth of the Humber is now preparing for a final offensive against those he holds responsible for his catalogue of recent humiliations.**

Back in Prezza's sights is Geoff Norris, a Downing Street policy adviser, for whom he invented the epithet "teenybopper". Norris is no spring chicken, having devoted what passed for his youth serving Robin Cook, but he has extended a sympathetic ear to the motor manufacturers and road lobby. So much so that Prezza holds him partially responsible for the gridlocked state of his heavily trailed, yet largely ignored public transport initiatives. Prezza's fury is also directed at Philip Gould, a key Blair aide, who presents the PM with weekly focus group findings. Gould's advice to Blair that transport was not an issue because his focus groups had told him so, succeeded in depriving Prezza's department any bite of the legislative timetable over the past two years.

But then transport suddenly did become an issue in South-east England, where the closure of sections of London Underground and worsening services on many privatised railways, led to poor old Prezza catching it in the neck. Having watched many of his plans being shredded and shelved, Prescott then had to contend with a damning report from Gwyneth Dunwoody's Commons transport select committee. As if to rub it in further, the Dear Leader, decided, as he usually does at times of crisis, to place his steadying hand on the wayward tiller. The by now predictable press call was made with Man of Action Blair appearing next to a disconsolate Prescott outside London Underground's St James Park HQ, with promises of "immediate and firm action". And then the unattributable briefings began against his deputy, who up until then had enjoyed a fair run with the press. "Poor old Prescott... too much on his plate," the stories ran... "department too unwieldy... needs to be broken-up... John must be able to concentrate on transport and give up his campaigning role...". Later, more ominously: "Prescott getting on... no longer provides the threat he once did... not going to be around for ever... could be in the Lords in the second term..." etc, etc.

Always a brooder with a thin hide, Prescott's fusillades against assorted Blairite teenyboppers and eggheads is growing in intensity and frequency, which should alarm Blair, just as much as his increasingly warm words for Gordon Brown will in turn please the cheerless chancellor.

**AT the end of July John Prescott put the final touches to his new-look London Transport Board, with private finance initiative (PFI) fanatic Sir Malcolm "Master" Bates in the chair and Derek Smith, privatiser of King's College Hospital, heading up London Underground.**

Prescott was especially keen on the new non-executive appointments, a "first-class team" for a "first-class transport system". Prominent among them is David Newlands – who, as a former finance director of Saatchi and Saatchi, has useful experience in selling crap Tory ideas to a gullible public.

After leaving Saatchis, Newlands worked from 1989 to 1997 as GEC's finance director. GEC had plenty of experience selling to the public sector, principally as an arms supplier, but wasn't always so good at coming in on time and on budget.

In 1982 GEC-Marconi won the contract to supply the Spearfish heavyweight torpedo, the "most advanced anti-ship and anti-submarine torpedo in the world". Deliveries were suspended for five years until "reliability problems" were overcome, and Spearfish only began to arrive in 1994, by which time costs had increased by £186m.

One can only hope the train arriving at platform one will be rather more prompt.

**JACK STRAW'S department published its white paper on tackling youth crime under the punchy title "No more excuses" last November. But nine months later the home office is still making excuses.**

The crime and disorder bill promises to "introduce statutory local partnerships, led by local authorities and the police, to harness the efforts of communities to reduce crime and disorder".

But will the bill make any difference to Pleckgate High School in Straw's own constituency of Blackburn, whose sports day was cancelled owing to fears of repeat violence after gang violence between white and Asian youths in the park where it was to be held?

Witton Park has a fully-equipped athletics track where the school usually holds its sports day, but the head teacher became worried this year after an incident on 18 June.

About 50 Asian youths who were making their way to Witton Park High School armed with cricket and baseball bats attacked a group of 20 white teenagers. Two juveniles were arrested at the scene and 26 have been apprehended since, with more arrests in the offing.

One parent at the school who believes that some way should have been found for the sports day to go ahead wrote to Straw and was sent the oblique reply: "As home secretary, Mr Straw has introduced the crime and disorder bill, which aims to ensure that young offenders are made to recognise the consequences of their actions and change their behaviour."

Despite this high resolve Straw blames the cancellation on the fact that the "school does not have adequate sports facilities of its own". Evidently he believes it would be easier to provide the school with a new athletics track at a massive cost than to make Witton Park a safe area for Blackburn's youth.

**PUTNEY's "new" Labour MP, Anthony Colman, was delighted to receive a copy of his Whips report, which confirmed what he already knew.**

Namely that he had not rebelled against the Government on any occasion and had an exemplary attendance record. Imagine then his discomfort as he discovered that the ever assiduous whips office had failed to notice that a disturbing gremlin appeared to have crept into his report and that his identity itself had been called into question. Where the words "Anthony Colman MP", should have been printed, there was instead in big black letters the telling: "Andrew Loyal MP."

Chris Smith has recently received a design for a new logo for his Millennium Commission. The Manchester-based designers, PoB, have, for some reason, heard nothing from the minister at all.

**THE DEPARTURE of Rod "Smack My Bitch Up" Richards from the Tory leadership in Wales has hardly dented the party's colourful nature. One character in particular has been the cause of some raised eyebrows around the Assembly over the summer – new leader Nick Bourne's constant companion and press secretary, Nadeem Rahman.**

Rahman's high-handed manner with hacks and party activists alike has caused some comment, as has his own personal chauffeur-driven Mercedes SLK, but perhaps the greatest bone of contention is his age. Even for a party looking to the future and clearing out the dead wood, recruiting a 17-year-old spin-doctor is somewhat unusual.

Rahman, the son of a wealthy Aberdare GP and businessman, is no newcomer to the Tory scene in Wales. At the tender age of 15 he was active in the anti-Assembly campaign, where his favoured method of wooing Labour sceptics from the remoter valleys into a joint "no" statement was to take them out for £60-a-head meals. He is also fondly remembered for the time when he telephoned Brian Mawhinney's office in the run up to the 1997 election, and gave the then party chairman a dressing-down for sitting around indoors rather than hitting the campaign trail. Unsurprisingly, Mawhinney was not too keen on being spoken to in such a way by a 14-year-old, and the young Rahman was removed from the party for a while.

In the aftermath of Richards' resignation last month, and the infighting over his replacement, Rahman made sure that political correspondents knew he was back – not least by telephoning one on his mobile outside Cardiff Tory HQ to request that he stop leaning on his Merc. Antics such as these, and Rahman's behaviour at the Welsh Assembly building (described by one member as "swanning around as if he owned the place"), did not exactly endear him to many in the party, and it was therefore a relief to many last week when Rahman departed Bourne's (unpaid) employ – in order to go back to school and finish his A-levels.

**WHEN the Simon Buckby charabanc departed the environs of West Bromwich, local Labourites heaved a sigh of relief.**

The former *FT* journalist had alighted at this place on the map, believing that Madame Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, would shortly announce her retirement, thus clearing the way for, erm, the upwardly mobile Buckby to succeed her as a Labour MP.

Buckby's withdrawal from West Bromwich and his renunciation of any parliamentary ambitions may have been connected with his appointment as director of the pro-EMU "Britain in Europe" group, and the announcement – which he promptly broadcast to long suffering *FT* colleagues – that his salary "had doubled to seventy grand!" Since his fortuitous elevation, Buckby's salary has since soared to £80,000 and so confident is he that "Britain in Europe" can cope without him, that last month, barely weeks into the job, he disappeared on a luxury holiday to the Bahamas. All this despite the fact that the long awaited launch of "Britain in Europe" has been put on hold – yet again.

PS: In the short period that Buckby has been at the helm, support for the single currency has dropped from 27 percent of the British public to 24 percent. Thank goodness the great helmsman is not on performance-related pay!

## ULSTER LATEST

**THE ANNUAL West Belfast Festival may have ended but the organisers seem determined to keep the show on the road, providing endless entertainment off stage.**

Lawyers acting for the festival's organisers (including Gerry Adams, his personal assistant Siobhan O'Hanlon and Danny Morrison) are seeking a judicial review of the Arts Council's decision to withdraw funding for a "play" called *Forced Upon Us*.

The Council's decision is admittedly surprising. Two festivals back, the taxpayer funded *Bin Lids* which revolved around four female characters befriending a soldier from the Welsh Guards, one of them then stealing his gun, and the rest holding onto him until two IRA men arrive and shoot him in the head.

This got rave reviews from some people ("Warmest congratulations to all those involved," G Adams) but didn't exactly set the Olivier or Tony awards alight.

The follow-up play is basically a vicious anti-Protestant rant, differing in no way from Ian Paisley's anti-Catholic polemics apart from the fact that the taxpayer isn't expected to cough up for his bigotry.

It's unclear why the Arts Council has finally got tough, but predictably the festival committee is crying "censorship" and wants the capitalist law courts to force a u-turn and hand over the occupying power's filthy lucre.

The brewing giant Bass agreed to promote a concert featuring singer turned priest Sinead O'Connor. Her head may be spinning but Sinead's heart is just about in the right place, and naively she intended to raise the issue of rape-style "punishment" attacks on those who've offended the IRA and its Loyalist equivalents.

Sinead planned to bring a child victim onto the stage during her show, and to appeal for the violence to stop. The festival organisers told her that she wouldn't be allowed to do this, and wisely she cancelled.

The judge hearing the judicial review against the Arts Council will no doubt puzzle over how the quango's decision to withdraw funding can be seen as "censorship" — even though the play went ahead in a state owned further education college — whilst the festival committee's decision to block O'Connor's anti-violence protest is an example of freedom of speech at its best.

**MEANWHILE, Tony Blair has decided to exempt Northern Ireland parties from legislation limiting foreign donations, so the dollars ought to continue to flow to Sinn Fein.**

But SF leaders are nervous that with decommissioning ruled out, and in the aftermath of the Florida gun running plot, Bill Clinton might start blocking money transfers and refusing visas. But they can relax. The IRA could blow up a couple of American convents tomorrow and Bill Clinton would look the other way. For Hillary Rodham Doormat is hoping to succeed Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in a seat with a high proportion of Irish American voters.

Her right-wing opponent Rudolph Giuliani has always gone out of the way to make Gerry Adams welcome on his frequent trips to New York.

The Clintons will be exceptionally careful not to do anything which might jeopardise Hillary's attempts to poach some of the Terrible Beauty vote from Giuliani, which means that between now and next year's election, Sinn Fein-IRA can do more or less anything they like without fear of American censure.

## CORRECTION

**IN *Private Eye* 980 (9 July 1999) we wrongly referred to Ms Siobhan O'Hanlon as an "Old Bailey bomber". We accept that Ms O'Hanlon, who formed part of the Sinn Fein negotiating team at Stormont in 1997, had no involvement in this attack in March 1973.**

Ms O'Hanlon has, of course, only one conviction. In April 1985 she was sentenced at Belfast Crown Court to seven years in jail for possession of explosives. The judge said she was: "Taking part in one stage in the preparation – assembly and movement of bombs – the end purpose of which was the destruction of life and property in this province."

We are happy to put the record straight.

## NOOKS and CORNERS

**THE DOME in Worthing was built as the Kursaal and is the only building of any distinction in Marine Parade, but its principal claim to fame is that it is Britain's longest running cinema. Unfortunately, The Dome is owned by Worthing Borough Council and, in consequence, has twice figured in this column: in 1988 (*Eye* 689) when the council tried to demolish it in favour of a shopping centre; and in 1996 (*Eye* 895) when it tried to sell the wretched building to a nightclub owner who proposed ripping out the interior to make it suitable for "a wide range of leisure uses." All this was thwarted by the Save the Dome campaign, whose petition attracted 35,000 signatures, and the listing of the building — it is now grade II*.**

**The Dome Cinema, Worthing, in 1986 by Anthony Cooke**

Now The Dome looks as if it has a chance of survival. The Worthing Dome and Regeneration Trust Ltd has been established to restore the building and grant applications to English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund are pending. But Worthing council does not give up that easily: having reverted back to Conservative rule, it has a long-established tradition of ruthless philistinism and favouring business cronies to maintain. In April, the council closed The Dome — after 88 years of continuous use for showing films — on the grounds of an engineering report which English Heritage's structural engineer subsequently demonstrated to be flawed. There are certainly things wrong with the structure: beam ends have corroded in the sea-air, and the council has taken no effective steps to prevent this. Furthermore, the council has allowed the steelwork in the east flank wall and in the entrance vestibule to corrode as well — perhaps it is about time English Heritage served a repairs notice.

But, of course, Worthing Council claims it is working with the Dome Trust to reopen the building in December — as a cinema — and then, after a year or so, to close it again for two years for the proposed repair programme. But *will* it then open again as a cinema? The council seems keen to encourage cinema developments elsewhere — anywhere but in The Dome. And the council declines to talk to City Screen Limited, which has put in a bid for either the freehold of the building or for a partnership with the council while being happy to work with the Trust. As City Screen has experience of running cinemas, no doubt the council is afraid they might make a success of The Dome. Meanwhile, the 1995 proposal by the Chapman Group (prop. Chris Chapman, the son and grandson of mayors of Worthing) to convert the building into a casino is still extant.

So the fear is that the council will succeed in its nefarious aim by stealth: allowing The Dome to fall into disrepair and then pleading to English Heritage that only a non-cinema use can save it. At a full council meeting last October, the then chairman of planning advocated a "semtex solution" for the poor old Dome. What can he have meant by that?

*PORTLAND stone is one of the finest of stones for building. Brilliant white when washed by the rain, it can take fine carving but also, when weathered, allows dramatic chiaroscuro effects. No wonder it was used by Hawksmoor for his stupendous London churches. Portland was the stone needed by Wren for St Paul's and it was the stone used by Robert Smirke for his vast Ionic stoa heralding the British Museum.*

*Well, the British Museum is now being revamped with huge dollops of Lottery money. While Sidney Smirke's Round Reading Room is being retained, the surrounding great quadrangle is being freed of later accretions so that Robert Smirke's masterpiece can be enjoyed again. And this involves the recreation of the internal South Portico. Naturally Portland was specified for this: as Alan Howarth, Minister for the Arts, stated in a recent letter to Ian Bruce, MP: "A key part of the Heritage Lottery Fund's assessment of historic building refurbishment projects is the quality of design materials. This was reflected in the terms of the contract let for the portico construction which specifically stated that Portland Stone must be used." And in a letter sent a year ago, the minister insisted that the HLF's project monitors confirmed that Portland was being used, as did the British Museum's project manager "who considered that there was no possibility of any other material being used".*

*Shome mistake shurely? It has now emerged that the new Ionic portico has NOT been built of Portland but of a French stone called anstrude roche claire from Rocamat (an inferior stone that does not take fine carving so well). The contractors, Easton Masonry, claim that the Portland quarries could not supply stones large enough — which the two Portland stone producers deny. So we must assume that what was good enough for Sir Robert Smirke is not good enough for Sir Norman, sorry, Lord Foster, whose firm is carrying out the Great Court scheme.*

*'Piloti'*

## STRAW DODGES

**WHY IS it that while Jack Straw's comments on travellers caused a national outrage, the same sentiments expressed as proposals for legislation in an environment department consultation paper slipped by unnoticed?**

On 22 July Straw said in an interview on BBC Radio West Midlands that many travellers passed themselves off as true Romany gypsies and "seem to think... that therefore they've got a licence to commit crimes and act in an unlawful way that other people don't have," prompting accusations of racism.

He continued: "We have got to get the message across to travellers, that they are going to be treated in the same way as anybody else when and if they commit offences and they can't have a licence to commit offences. In the past, I'm afraid, there has been rather too much toleration of travellers and we want to see the police and local authorities cracking down on them."

A DETR consultation paper published in July, ironically entitled "Improving Rights of Way in England and Wales" suggests the following "measures to assist in crime prevention, and to rationalise certain diversion and closure powers."

**Proposal 13:**

*Highway authorities should be able to make traffic regulation orders to prohibit the use of a highway at certain times, with a power to erect gates, where, on the basis of police advice, they are satisfied that such action is necessary to prevent persistent criminal activity.*

**Proposal 14:**

*To complement proposal 13, highway authorities throughout England and Wales should be empowered to make traffic regulation orders denying access to premises by pedestrians other than owners, leaseholders or occupiers of premises which cannot be reached by another highway.*

**Proposal 15:**

*Highway authorities should be empowered to divert or permanently close highways where, on police advice, they are satisfied that this is necessary to protect the safety of the public. There should be a presumption in favour of diversion rather than closure.*

In other words a proliferation of the powers of police and local authorities to "crack down" on travellers.

*'Backbiter'*

# EYE TV

**Eye Of The Storm;**
**The Answer Lies In The Soil;**
**Police, Camera, Action!**

**ANYONE who has ever tried to get a television show off the ground knows the only word commissioning editors really want to hear. "How much does it cost?" they ask, anxiously unfurling paper clips. "Oh it's very cheap," you assure them, and they exhale, possibly for the first time that day. Cheap.**

Although there's still loads of money rolling around in television, they obviously want to spend as little of it as possible making programmes. Cheap. Somebody else got the wad for the big budget drama, and the news has just had another makeover, so the rest must make do with the scraps. Cheap: a rallying cry for TV producers and budgies alike.

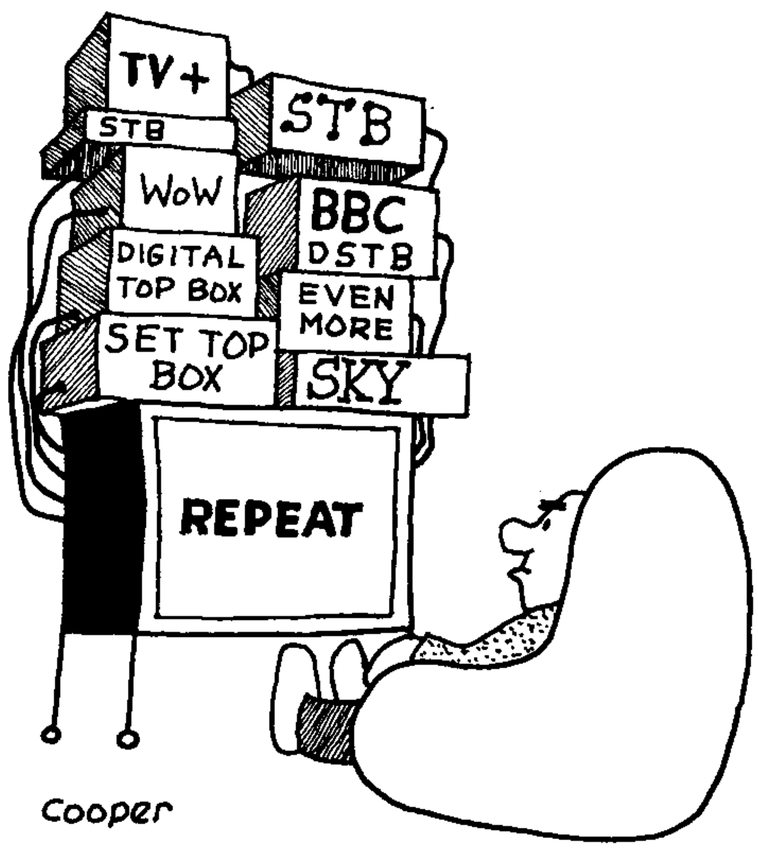
ITV's schedule last Thursday night illustrated the consequences of such a policy. *Eye Of The Storm* is yet another weather series, hosted from somewhere hot by Richard Madeley. The idea is to examine the human interest angle of all the various earthquakes, hurricanes and heatwaves we've already seen in millions of previous weather series, which generally involves interviewing some of the fat people who were wedged somewhere tight when the storm hit. (Thin people always seem to escape without harm. Life's unfair like that.) Madeley wears a different T-shirt for each linking piece-to-camera, presumably to give the impression that he's in a different country each time, while the bulk of the programme is made up of TV footage bought for 8p from foreign TV companies (all thanked in the end credits). Any one of the ads shown in the half time break will have cost more to make than the entire series.

*Eye Of The Storm* looks lavish, however, compared to *The Answer Lies In The Soil*. Ten years ago the idea that ITV would broadcast a gardening quiz show at prime time would have been greeted with disbelieving guffaws – yet here it is, a classically inconsequential piece of daytime product crazily promoted to a prestigious eight o'clock slot. Quippish gardening gurus of no identifiable personality exchange weeding gags with terrified-looking women in floral print dresses while the blonde quizmistress, whose face may be vaguely familiar from other daytime shows, looks strangely. *The Answer Lies In The Soil* has only one identifiable grace. It's very cheap.

Even ITV, though, knows to save the worst till last. *Police, Camera, Action!*, the CCTV series hosted by Little Alastair Stewart And His Amazing Sweptover Barnet, has for years been at the very vanguard of the Cheap TV movement. Its radical combination of readily available old footage and pompous finger-wagging narration has spawned so many imitators that it's easy to forget just how useless the original was. But if there's one thing cheaper than an episode of *Police, Camera, Action!* it's a repeat of *Police, Camera, Action!* (the exclamation mark's on a percentage, but the commas foolishly took a fee). So here's Alastair again in his fun-size raincoat warning of the perils of bad driving.

There has always been cheap television. Twenty years ago it came in the form of terrible sitcoms, all shot on video on two studio sets; of quiz and game shows, handing out prizes no one in their right mind would ever buy; and of soaps, which were expressly designed to maximise audiences for minimum cost. Since then sitcoms have withered and died, game shows hav fled to daytime and soaps have become the cornerstone of British TV, with salaries to match. The factual sludge that has replaced them is easy to make and endlessly recyclable, but unlike the cheap shows of the past, it's also fantastically boring. Only in British television in the 1990s could this not seem especially important. But then for some commissioning editors even cheap is often not cheap enough. There's one word they like even better, and that's "free".

*'Couch Potato'*



Cooper

## SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

**John Wayne Sleep**

## MEDIA NEWS

**WHEN the BBC appointed its new director-general William Hague declared that Conservative central office would employ a full-time Dyke-watcher to make sure no party bias went unnoticed. Commendable vigilance – but who, meanwhile, is watching Tory supporters in the Beeb?**

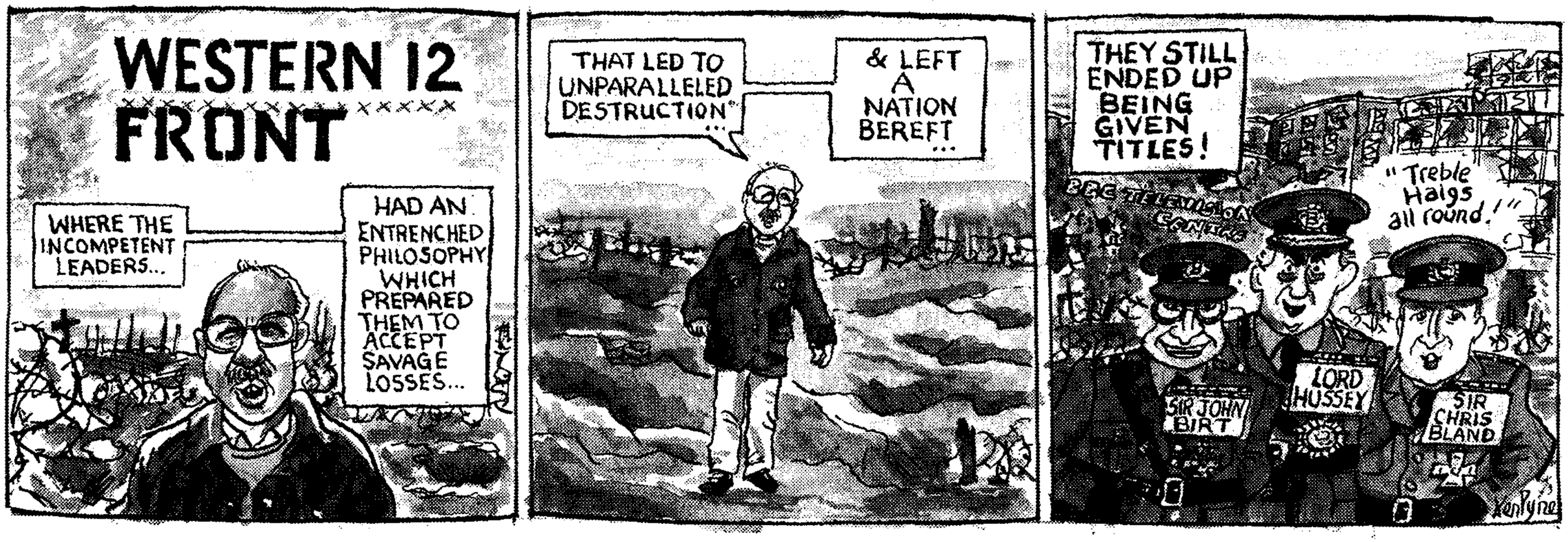
Ace reporter on the BBC Norwich *Look East* news programme Kevin Bentley joined the Conservative Party's list of approved parliamentary candidates in February.

The BBC producer guidelines state in the section entitled "Conflicts of interest": "A BBC person appearing on a political party's 'approved list' of potential parliamentary candidates may be acceptable if the candidate for that constituency has not yet been chosen.

"However, that person may not be able to undertake high level programme responsibilities. Each case must be considered separately by the head of department. It may be possible to move the individual to a less sensitive position until the candidacy is resolved."

According to the BBC News press office, reporting is classed as a "high-level programme responsibility". A "less sensitive position" refers to administrative work.

Bentley, however, does not consider his political ambitions a bar to his journalistic career – and continues to report stories from constituencies where he has hopes of being selected.


WESTERN 12 FRONT
WHERE THE INCOMPETENT LEADERS...
HAD AN ENTRENCHED PHILOSOPHY WHICH PREPARED THEM TO ACCEPT SAVAGE LOSSES...
THAT LED TO UNPARALLELED DESTRUCTION...
& LEFT A NATION BEREFT...
THEY STILL ENDED UP BEING GIVEN TITLES!
"Treble Haigs all round!"
SIR JOHN BIRT
LORD HUSSEY
SIR CHRIS BLAND

## THAT'S RIGHT, JOHN...

A new column devoted to attempts by interviewees to ingratiate themselves with their interrogator by the frequent use of his or her first name.

**PROGRAMME:** *On The Ropes*, Radio 4.

**Interviewer**

John Humphrys.

**Interviewee**

Mike Fitzgerald, former vice-chancellor of Thames Valley University.

**SCORE:** 34 uses of the name in a 30-minute programme – a JPM (Johns per minute) rate of 1.13.

*Nominated by John Smith. £10 paid for entries.*

**WORRIED staff at BBC Resources are still waiting to find out if their new head, Margaret Salmon, will continue the endless efficiency drives (job-shedding schemes for production people) and performance reviews (job-creation schemes for managers) begun by her predecessor, "Bonking" Rod Lynch.**

Lynch, who is now applying his legendary skills to the Greek airline, Olympic, left Resources with a disastrous morale problem and mounting debts. Some more belt-tightening is expected in order to balance budgets.

This anxiety has led to extraordinary new levels of brown-nosing from those keenest to avoid the axe – especially those in the field of customer service, identified by many as a problem area. According to the lavish, glossy PR rag *Around Resources*, a series of "Service Excellence Tours" has been created for BBC staff to "get to the heart of customer service excellence through those in the know – award winners in the field". BBC staff from areas with less than excellent records have found themselves being dragged around such well known broadcasting experts as Harry Ramsden's chip shop, Lands End clothing and the Leicester Royal Infirmary to brush up on the "core values" they might have forgotten.

And how is Lynch doing in his new job? Well, he has already endured "a wave of abuse from the Greek press and politicians" (*Guardian*) and only three weeks after his appointment almost all the 9,000 staff at Olympic walked out on strike. Just like old times.

## OH, YEAH?

"You have only to study the faces of the countrymen, dispassionately portrayed in Stubbs' canvases – reapers and farmers, jockeys and trainees, stable lads and milkmaids, dukes and generals – to perceive their fundamental acceptance of roles in a society united by nature and sporting zeal."

— Paul Johnson, *Spectator*, 21 August

**"GIVEN half a chance, a German will whip off his kit... they disport, Teutonically akimbo, blond, paunches and willies lolling."**

So said Wapping's answer to Oscar Wilde, A A Gill, in his infamous diatribe against the German nation in the *Sunday Times* last month. And it seems he is nothing if not diligent in his research. How else can we explain the great man's appearance recently on German television channel Vox, available on satellite in Britain, where as part of their *Wa(h)re Liebe* or "True Love?" series he was pictured taking great interest in the making of a German hard core pornographic film?

Or was the unmistakeable figure introduced as "Journalist A A Gill", who was pictured intently watching a naked couple having sex, merely a lookalike?

## JUST FANCY THAT!

A TOURIST in a Greek taverna was puzzled as to why gales of laughter from the locals greeted a TV news report of Prince Charles's Aegean cruise every time Camilla Parker Bowles was mentioned. Eventually a friendly Greek explained that *kameela* is the Greek word for "camel".

**THE CRAZE for cop-on-the-wall documentaries continues with Channel 4's current series *Coppers* produced by Historic Films.**

Inspector Knacker and his mates – suspicious of docu-soaps after the Liverpool force was made to look ridiculous, to say the least, in BBC2's *Mersey Blues* earlier this year – will be interested to know that Historic Films is a new division of a larger company, Insight.

Insight happens to be the parent of company of Hart Ryan Productions, makers of... *Mersey Blues*.

**THE BBC is kicking itself over the publicity surrounding Channel Five's remake of *It's A Knockout* — a show the corporation has been sitting on for years — and is disputing the fifth channel's right to use the name.**

Stuart Hall, who presented the family favourite from 1972 to 1982 and now stages Knockouts for major companies including Shell, Smith Kline Beecham and the Rover Group, has been advised by his lawyers that it is impossible to copyright such a well-known format as *It's a Knockout*.

The new show produced for Channel Five by Ronin Productions was announced in April at the Montreux television festival. Ronin licensed the format of the show from Interville, the French company which came up with the idea in 1962. They also discovered that *It's a Knockout* was not a registered trademark so went ahead and registered it themselves. The BBC accused them of trading on the goodwill generated by the original programmes and demanded "their" trademark back, but Ronin refused.

Hall, meanwhile, was tipped to present the Channel Five show, but could not agree on terms. He offered to sell back the original costumes which he bought from the Beeb when the original *Knockout* was taken off air, but Channel Five decided they were not in good enough condition to merit the asking price of, er, £250,000.

## LUVVIES

She was a consummate actress. Whatever the director wanted, she gave him. All she said was, 'The spirit of Steve is here'.

**PIERCE BROSNAN**
**talking about co-star Rene Russo in the remake of Steve McQueen's "The Thomas Crown Affair", Channel 4**

We wanted a crew that would be able to talk. We wanted huggers. I remember we had to choose between two people who were both really good. Tim [Roth] went, 'I think she'll be a better hugger'.

**DIXIE LINDER**
**Guardian**

*An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.*

*"It's not very realistic – there are no floppy-haired public school boys"*

## OPERA NEWS

***Daily Telegraph* hack Rupert Christiansen's close relationship with Gerald Moore "singing teacher and vocal coach to many leading opera stars", raises concern in some quarters about Christiansen's critical impartiality.**

Moore has trained several singers at the English National Opera in the past but is not doing so at present.

In a review of ENO's *La Traviata* Christiansen complained: "The management proudly claims that it takes great care to monitor and pace the development of its young artists. So why has it just cut their allowance of singing lessons?

"Why – to get to the specific point that provokes this lament – was the promising soprano Sandra Ford cast in the enormously problematic role of Violetta in *La Traviata* and then given so little musical and dramatic help with it? Much of her singing was admirable. Her voice is firm and full-toned. But she tired long before the end... Where was the nurturing coach who should have worked her through such things?"

Which absent "nurturing coach" could Christiansen possibly mean? Perhaps he had in mind the teacher who coached Rosa Mannion, the last singer to play the part – Gerald Moore.

**FLEET STREET's opera critics were impressively harmonious in their verdicts on the Glyndebourne production of *The Bartered Bride*.**

"What luxury Glyndebourne casting," sighed Michael Kennedy in the *Sunday Telegraph*.

"Luxury casting," echoed Edward Seckerson in the *Indie*.

"The casting," Rodney Milnes commented in *The Times*, adding his voice to the swelling chorus, "was luxurious."

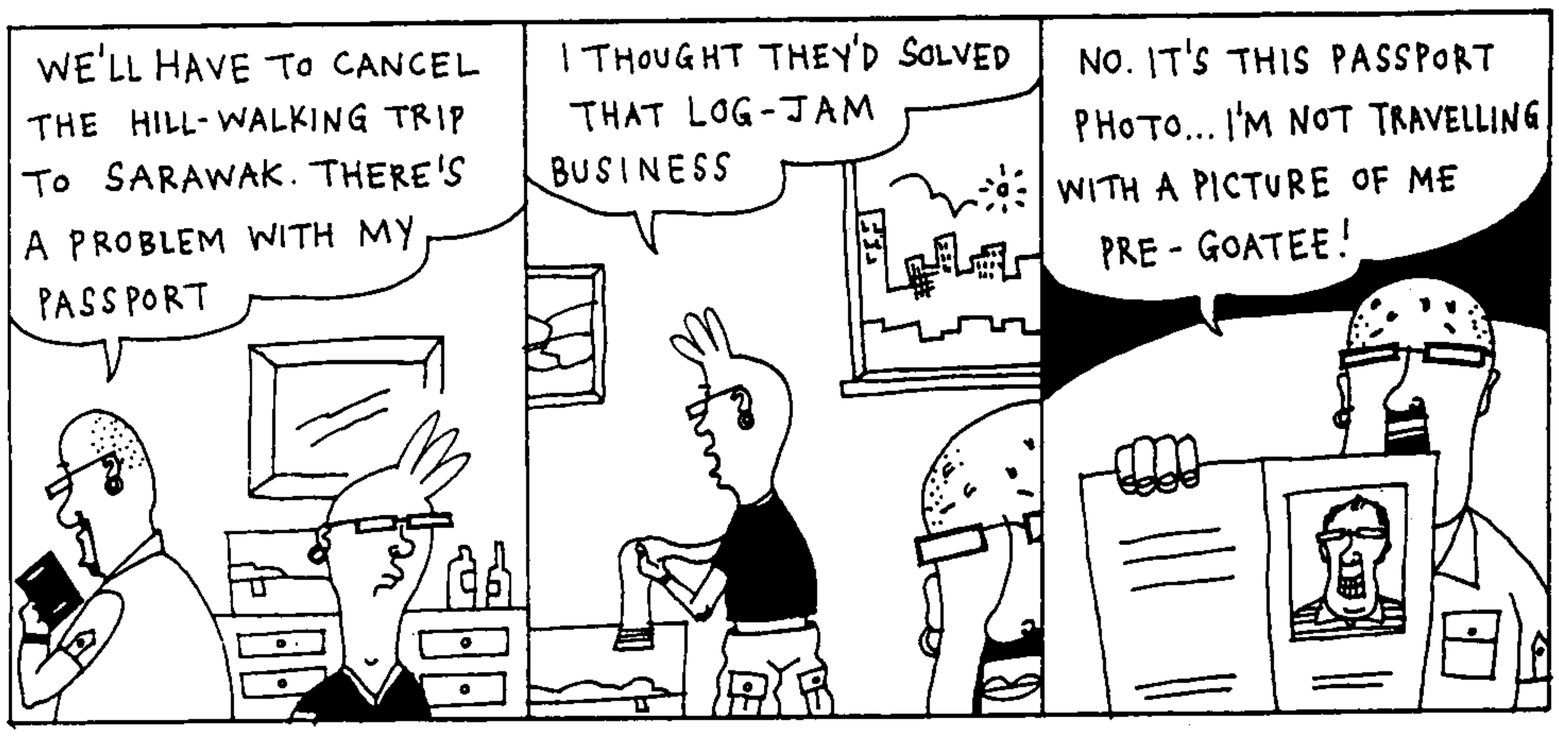
## OH, YEAH?

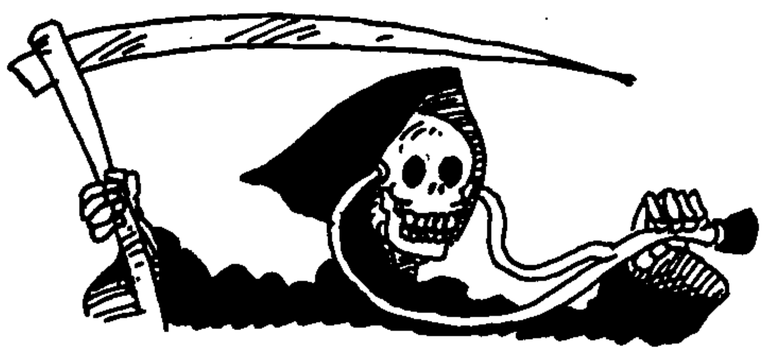
'I'm usually way, way ahead of music trends'

— Barry Manilow, *Times Magazine*, 21 August

## IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


WE'LL HAVE TO CANCEL THE HILL-WALKING TRIP TO SARAWAK. THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH MY PASSPORT
I THOUGHT THEY'D SOLVED THAT LOG-JAM BUSINESS
NO. IT'S THIS PASSPORT PHOTO... I'M NOT TRAVELLING WITH A PICTURE OF ME PRE-GOATEE!



## DOING THE ROUNDS

### What, no midwife?

**IN 1993, the Conservative government launched "Changing Childbirth", a project aimed at increasing the choices given to pregnant women about their maternity care. Six years later, an audit of 87 percent of the midwifery units in England has found that only three can deliver the quality of care promised in the report.**

The vast majority of units are short of midwives, with as many as 18 vacant posts in some London trusts and 30 percent of units unable to provide "one-to-one" care for women in labour. The national shortfall of midwives needed to get all units up to standard is estimated at 5,000 but amidst the Government's £5m nurse recruitment campaign, the only ads for midwifery were on local radio. Unsurprisingly, the DoH has no idea how many midwives it has attracted back to work.

The DoH does, however, have a better idea of how many its losing. 2,000 have gone in the last three years, leaving the current level at its lowest for 10 years. The latest high profile loss is Fiona Sommerville, head of midwifery services at Brighton Health Care NHS trust, who is going because "cuts have caused a growing conflict between my professional role and my managerial role... I have struggled to maintain the quality of service at a level I feel patients deserve... the trust has no more money. In fact, it needs to make a saving of £1.5m this year. Midwifery is not a priority because it does not attract waiting list money."

Midwives at the other end of the career ladder are even less optimistic. Of 24 who recently qualified from Salford University just one has managed to find a job. And those who have jobs are finding that many trusts have reneged on a 1995 agreement to pay midwives a minimum F grade to reflect their expertise. Last month, the National Childbirth Trust expressed its "bitter disappointment" that many women are still being denied home births despite evidence that for low-risk pregnancies you're just as safe (if not safer) at home. In fact, the decision about where to have a baby rests entirely with the mother. but if you do it without a good midwife, you're really tempting fate. Alas, many home birthers buy the plastic sheeting and the cord cutter only to be told their midwife has been cancelled at the last minute due to staff shortages. They then rush into hospital to be offered half a trainee midwife and a medical student. So much for changing childbirth.

**ON 23 December 1998 Kathryn Jones, a 23-year-old midwife, was killed on Pennyquick Hill, Bath, when her car was in collision with a private ambulance operated by a company called Wings under contract with Bristol Children's Hospital. On 19 August the driver of the ambulance was convicted of careless driving, fined £200 with £40 costs and six penalty points. Kathryn's parents have discovered that the driver did not receive any special driving instruction from Wings until a month or so after the accident. So why was he allowed behind the wheel of an ambulance rushing to an emergency?**

Frank Dobson has told the Joneses that the conduct of private ambulance operators is governed by the 1993 Code of Practice. This states that as a minimum standard, private ambulance crew should be in possession of a certificate of competence for completion of basic training (including driving) equivalent to the basic NHS ambulance aid syllabus. However the code clearly states that it "is not designed to cover the provision of the 999 emergency ambulance service". So what is? The document also warns that "private ambulance operators, unlike nursing homes in the private sector, are not subject to regular monitoring... it is for purchasers to ensure that adequate systems are in place for the monitoring of contract compliance and the standard of service provided".

Whether the Bristol Children's Hospital will share accountability with Wings for the tragedy remains to be seen, but MD has in the past received complaints about the lack of regulation and dangerous driving of private ambulances as they attempt to provide an emergency service on the cheap.

Is it a nationwide problem? All information gratefully received.

*M.D.*

## SIGNAL FAILURES

### The wrong sort of excuse

**MAKING U-turns on railways is impossible for train drivers, but for transport ministers it is all part of the job.**

A few years ago Labour battled to save British Rail, warning that private companies would not perform so well. Its prophecy was spot on, with the Central Rail Users' Consultative Committee (Crucc) reporting further increases in delays, cancellations and complaints. But Labour is now echoing Virgin's Richard Branson and GNER's Christopher Garnett (*Eyes passim*) in blaming BR for today's problems.

Responding to Crucc's figures, Lord Macdonald (the fourth transport minister since Labour came to power) said privatisation had followed "decades of neglect" – but the figures show no correlation between historic neglect and current performance. Crucc cited Chiltern Railways and Cardiff Railway as two of the worst offenders for increased delays (up by 87 and 64 percent respectively). Chiltern benefited from total route modernisation – encompassing tracks, signals, trains and stations – in the early 1990s. Cardiff's trains are relatively new, built in 1985, and its core route has been modernised over the last few years (using external cash). One company that might have reason to moan about decades of neglect is Scotrail, which has a large fleet of trains from the 1950s; the Crucc figures show the most punctual operator of all was, er, Scotrail.

The strongest evidence of neglect comes not from the 1970s and 1980s but the period since BR's break-up after the Tories won the 1992 election. Crucc cites staff shortages and train failures as two of the most significant causes of delays — in other words, cost-cutting and mismanagement by today's operators. Many infrastructure problems, like the rash of broken rails, stem from Railtrack's decision to slow the pace of renewing worn-out materials.

But Macdonald had more excuses ready, having seemingly been briefed by the Association of Train Operating Companies. He said the railways were victims of their own success because they were carrying 12 percent more passengers; he forgot to say the operators could have used the extra income to employ more drivers, guards and fitters to make the services more reliable.

He also pointed to 1,000 extra services being run each day. The rail industry would like us to believe this inevitably increases congestion, but in reality scores of signal engineers have lost their jobs (*Eye* 977) instead of being commissioned by Railtrack — which pockets access charges for those extra trains — to alleviate bottlenecks.

Macdonald also tried to stun his audience by saying £2bn was being spent on new trains. We are meant to think money is being invested as never before, but in the 1980s, when subsidy was plummeting, BR bought hundreds of new trains for regional services and locos and carriages now used by Branson and Garnett. It also began a huge programme of replacing all slam-door trains in the South-east — until privatisation applied the brakes. The current £2bn merely goes some way to catching up after more than 1,000 days passed in the mid-90s without a new train being ordered. The biggest difference from the 1980s is that there is now cash aplenty for more new trains, as the rolling stock companies declare profits that equal or exceed their annual costs.

If neglect is to blame for the state of the railways, perhaps Labour should own up. Labour has neglected its pre-election promise of a publicly owned, publicly accountable railway, delayed introduction of the badly needed strategic rail authority and opted not to regulate the rolling stock companies, but to leave them to continue making their obscene profits in peace.

*'Dr B. Ching'*

## DOWN ON THE FARM

**'T WAS a perfect story for the six o'clock news. Cute baby animals facing destruction, a celebrity name, some farmers in angry despair, and a wanton and neglectful government which is somehow to blame for it all.**

No wonder the networks pounced on it when four Somerset dairy farmers, unable to sell their calves in the market, took them all the way to Sussex to give them to Carla Lane, TV playwright and animal welfare campaigner, so that she could look after them in her animal sanctuary. Otherwise the farmers would have been forced to shoot their own calves which, so the story ran, would have upset them no end.

Well, call him a hard-hearted bar steward, but the only tears rolling down Gumboot's cheeks were caused by the awesome hypocrisy of the farmers and the gullibility of the media. For what the Somerset Four forgot to mention was that all of their bull calves for more than three years have been shot. What was new – entirely missed by the invited reporters – was not that the calves would have to be put down, but that the farmers could no longer collect £47 for each calf which the Government would then dispose of for them.

Since March 1996 when the BSE crisis erupted, the calf processing aid scheme has seen almost two million calves killed at a cost of £170m, regarded as a cheap way (on the BSE scale) of stabilising the market and compensating the dairy industry for the loss of exports. The ending of the scheme will actually mean that fewer calves will be slaughtered at birth, rather than more, because rearers will be able to buy them more cheaply.

But even before BSE things were hardly bright from the calves' point of view. Most of them were exported, to spend 12 weeks alone in a stinking crate before being turned into veal, but few dairy farmers joined Carla Lane on the docks to protest against that.

So why can't dairy bull calves be reared for beef like they used to? Because nearly all dairy farmers have chosen to go for milk yield with Holstein type cows rather than the more beefy Friesians, in the sure and certain knowledge that the calves would be worthless except to a French veal producer.

The industry has been heading up this blind alley since long before BSE. And as for the problem of calf disposal – surely every farmer has a shotgun and a muck heap?

*'Gumboot'*

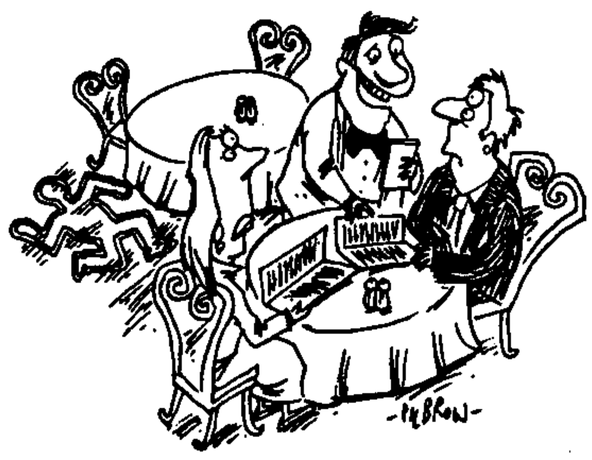
## Down on the Fish Farm

**PROFESSOR David Mackay, north region director of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, claims that his political masters are "misleading people".**

He says that current fish farm practices are causing environmental damage which is reaching "near crisis levels". He also blames salmon farms for the catastrophic decline in West Highland wild fish stocks.

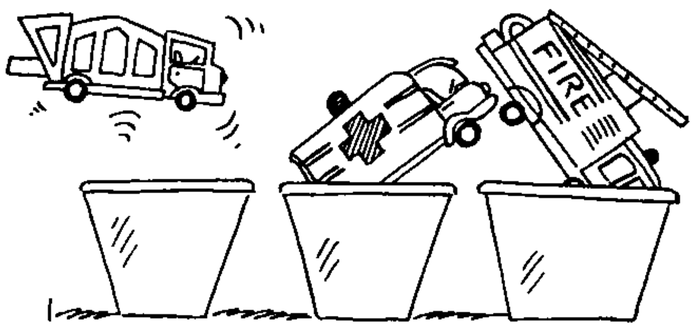
Why should Prof. Mackay chose to speak out now, given that his quango and predecessor bodies have authorised the dumping hundreds of thousands of tonnes of untreated fish farm sludge into the sea for more than 25 years? One reason might be that the sludge is about to hit the fan. A legal challenge is being mounted by representatives of 150,000 UK sport anglers, alleging that Sepa has been negligent in its duty to protect Scotland's wild fish from disease and pollution from salmon farms.

A possible Sepa defence against this accusation could be: "Nothing to do with us. We only follow orders. Anyway, Prof. Mackay warned the Government about this last August." The prof dropped his bombshell in Norway at an international fish farming conference. He particularly accused the Scottish Executive (SE) of being less than frank about the current outbreak of amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP). The outbreak, in its second month, now covers 10,000 square miles of Scottish waters.



*"I couldn't particularly recommend the seafood risotto"*

# ROTTEN BOROUGHS




## LOAD OF RUBBISH

RESIDENTS and commuters to the West End will have greeted recent reports about Tory Westminster council's pisspoor street cleaning contractors, Onyx, with wry smiles. Headlines such as "Refuse firm faces sack after damning report" confirm what the public know from walking the filthy streets - that Onyx (see Eyes passim) are, er, rubbish.

The *Evening Standard* quotes an internal report from Westminster's environment department which states: "The cleansing service provided by Onyx has declined over the summer period and despite warnings from the council, no improvement has been made". Yet the *Standard* fails to mention that the last such report, in May, claimed that street cleanliness was well above national standards: "The evidence is that there has been a steady improvement overall from November 1998... which was 63 percent at grade 'A'; standard, to almost 79 percent as at 31 March 1999".

So what went wrong between May and August? Er, nothing. Onyx have been consistently useless. The difference is that the Westminster staff who monitor Onyx are on a bizarre form of performance-related pay (PRP). If Onyx is *seen* to be doing its job well, managers at Westminster get handsome bonuses. The period covered by the May report happened to coincide with the period in which the PRP was calculated. Most of Westminster's environment managers have been celebrating in recent weeks with bonuses ranging from £600 to £10,000 a head. With the money in the bank, however, the scales seem to have suddenly fallen from their eyes.

**● ANOTHER so-called "service provider" under threat of the chop is EDS, the world's worst computer firm (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*), which has again cocked-up bigtime in Kingston, south-west London. In October last year (*Eye* 961) EDS came within a whisker of being sacked by Kingston after council tax and rent arrears soared under its £1m a year stewardship. After being put on notice that its contract would be terminated, EDS managed to stay out of trouble until last month (August), when it despatched 1400 letters wrongly accusing the recipients of housing benefit fraud. EDS is not expected to get another chance when the council's policy and resources committee meets to decide its fate on 16 September.**

## UNFUNNY GAG

THE erosion of democratic accountability in local government has taken a major step forward with the decision by Capita, one of Britain's biggest private "service providers" (see *Eyes passim*) to prevent staff from having face-to-face contact with councillors.

Capita employees are allowed to speak to councillors on the phone but not meet them or attend public meetings at which councillors are present. The decision, which is being challenged by Lambeth council, is clearly aimed at preventing the company coming under fire in public.

In Lambeth total complaints about the housing benefit "service" provided by Capita are running at a staggering 700 a week. In response to the fiasco Lambeth has set up a scrutiny commission which will have public hearings later this month, with the power to quiz council staff. But Capita's ruling could mean that its employees will escape questioning. Capita, by the way, announced pre-tax profits of £14m in the first half of the year.

In *Eye* 982 we reported on another disastrous "outsourcing" at Lambeth: that of parking services to contractor Drakes. The obvious question is: why doesn't Lambeth simply sack such unsatisfactory "service providers"? The answer is that their contracts provide little redress for the council if the service provided doesn't come up to scratch. Why? Because the council's legal department doesn't have a contracts side. All its contracts work is... contracted out!

**● FORMER Brighton council leader and onetime squatters champion Lord "Steve" Bassam may have gone off to a new job as a Home Office minister to help Jack Straw persecute asylum-seekers, but his former stamping ground remains in good hands.**

**The council, against the wishes of most locals and with the support of ambitious Hove MP Ivor Caplin, Margaret Beckett's PPS, is busy steam-rollering through a plan to sell, for a pittance, a listed seafront building, the King Alfred sports centre, to developers Citygrove Leisure plc. Citygrove – confusingly similarly named to a Citygrove plc which went into liquidation in the early 1990s – wants to build a 10-screen Virgin cinema complex, a McDonald's and a huge car-park, with a much smaller sports centre tacked on as a sop to objectors. Citygrove, unusually for a firm of property developers, donated £2,500 to Labour party funds last year.**

## FLAT FIDDLE

A SECRET report by Lambeth's auditors, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), has revealed that the housing department's computer system is wide open to abuse by staff.

Most serious of the report's many findings is that Lambeth has no way of knowing if staff are deleting properties from the computer database and then coming to private arrangements to sublet flats, with the result that rental income is not going to the council but is instead going straight into the bank accounts of corrupt staff. Having assessed the risk of this happening PWC has informed the council that urgent action is needed to stop the practice whereby deletions are processed by individuals and not double-checked in 19 out of 20 cases. Start and end dates of tenancies are often falsified by neighbourhood housing offices to show properties as being void (empty) for shorter periods of time than actually is the case.

Another void in the council's finances was identified in instances where a property's financial details are permanently amended for personal gain. For example, a corrupt employee can alter the details of rent charged to a friend or someone willing to pay a backhander, from say £60 per week to £16. So poor are Lambeth's procedures to protect the assets of the council that PWC warn that "amendments made fraudulently will go undetected".

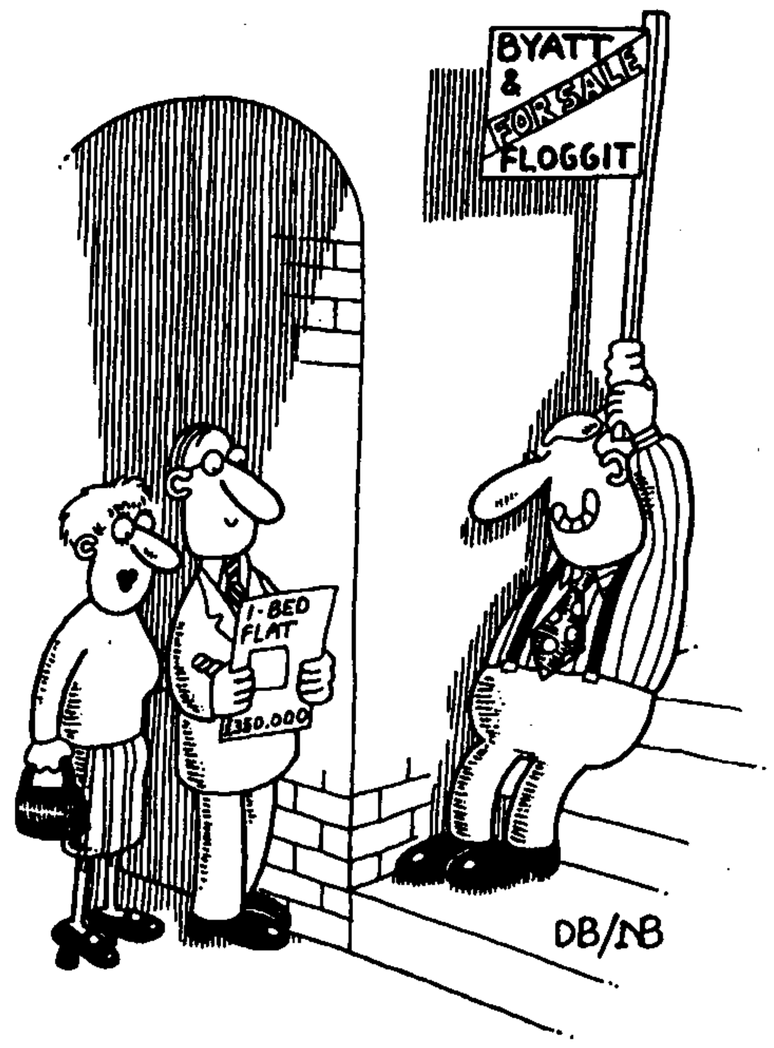
## CARRY ON, COUNCILLOR

THE TROUBLES of Isle of Wight councillor Colin Boswell, fined almost £250,000 last month for using illegal organophosphate sprays on his crops, may not be over. The Health and Safety Executive, which successfully prosecuted Boswell over his profligate use of dangerous chemicals on his sweetcorn and garlic farm (see *Eye* 982), has ordered a further investigation after allegations of outbreaks of illness among people and animals in the Newchurch area.

One of the most worrying cases is that of Alex McBain, 76, who claims he was accidentally sprayed on 9 June, 1997, while out with his two pet dogs. He says he suffered boils on his body as a result, as did his dogs, one of which died. Mr McBain, who was previously in excellent health, subsequently had to be hospitalised three times, once with total paralysis. Boswell denies that organophosphate sprays were used on the day in question. The HSE, meanwhile, is investigating other cases going back to 1996.

Boswell, an Independent councillor, has been staunchly supported throughout by the council leadership. It appears that he and his County Hall cronies feel no need for him to consider his position as a representative of the people he risked poisoning.

## NEW OLD SAYINGS




**London property is theft**

## DONNY DÉJÀ VU

LOCALS who despair at Labour's failure to clean up its act in Doncaster frequently make comparisons between the Donnygate scandal of the 1990s and the Poulson affair of the 1970s: exposure of councillors on the fiddle leads to the slow uncovering of a web of corruption that ends up having effects that are felt nationally (watch this space).

There is, in fact, a fascinating direct link between the two scandals: former Doncaster councillor Tommy Roebuck. After the Poulson affair blew up Roebuck was convicted for "conspiring with T Dan Smith [the former Newcastle city boss] and others" over a development in the Mexborough area of Doncaster. When he came out of prison in 1979 he went straight back into local politics and was elected as an Independent Labour councillor. Soon afterwards he was accepted back into the official Labour party fold and helped set up the Mining Community Group (MCG), the unofficial cabal of Doncaster councillors now under investigation by Inspector Knacker's "Danum" investigation. For two decades, a culture of cronyism grew up in Doncaster under which decisions about the town and appointments to council jobs were decided by the MCG.

Just as "old" Labour was happy to accept Roebuck back with open arms, "new" Labour is proving just as forgiving of modern villains. Doncaster's Cllr Steve Judge, himself an ex-miner, convicted last month of expenses fiddling and sentenced to 120 hours of community service, insists that he will stay in office. "No one here wants me to go," he says. "I have the full support of my party colleagues." Indeed. This quote is a spooky echo of Tommy Roebuck's words on coming out of prison and declaring his intention to return to local politics: "Public life is the only life I know."

## HOM SAP

AUSTIN

# Letters

## Unlucky girl

*Sir,*

*I read with astonishment Garry Bushell's letter (Eye 983). The sarcasm in "thanking" the Eye for intruding into his private life was eclipsed only by the irony. Perhaps one day he'll read the rag he works for.*

*I am surprised at you, however, for staying silent on the subject of his fiancée. Gary linked your "gormless" observation to her blonde hair. He wishes! Shacking up with Britain's Most Bearded TV Reviewer is enough to earn her that adjective.*

*With sympathies for the private lives raked over by the Murdoch press,*

*MARTIN GREENHOUSE,*

*Edinburgh.*

## Put off my stroke

*Sir,*

*As I was flicking through the satellite channels late one night I happened across the 10 minute "freeview" for Television X, the fantasy channel (I don't care what you think, I'm 19, between women and soon to join the forces). Imagine my surprise to find the Sun's premier TV critic, Garry Bushell, personally endorsing the station. Obviously the man recognises quality programming when he observes it, unfortunately the sight of him totally put me off my night's entertainment.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*DAN PORSA,*

*Via E-mail.*

## PM tension

*Sir,*

*As a loyal subscriber, I found your Colour Section (Eye 983) just a tad presumptuous. So, Tony Blair doesn't go off to the Palace to be patronised by the Queen every week.*

*So? What's so terrible about that? Why on earth should he? Running the country is a damn sight more important than flattering the self-importance of the head of the biggest bunch of parasites in Christendom, who, like many of the most successful parasites in nature, have somehow managed to convince their host that their presence is essential for its well-being. Could it be that Blair, who was, after all, democratically elected, is not fooled? Or maybe he remembers the 1974 general election, when, according to Dennis Skinner, the Queen tried to use her power to deny the result, because she preferred the Grocer Heath to (horrors!) a Labour administration?*

*And if Blair wants to use these antediluvian morons as electoral assets, why shouldn't he? At least that is one use to which they can reasonably be put.*

*Yours, in memory of Tom Paine,*
*SARAH BOWES,*

*Caterham, Surrey.*

## A doctor writes...

*Sir,*

*I cannot let your recent news article "Bad Blood" go unchallenged. The two studies that appeared in the British Medical Journal concerning the use of albumin and colloids have been rightly condemned by many sources as bad science. There are specific concerns that the methods of analysis used, ie the gathering together of lots of little studies combining the results, putting the results through a number crunch machine and producing an answer may magnify the errors of the tests involved rather than cancelling them out.*

*The Committee of Safety of Medicines indeed concluded that there is insufficient evidence of harm to warrant withdrawal of albumin products and stresses that albumin is basically a very expensive way of providing fluid to the patient and that there are a lot of cheaper and possibly safer alternatives.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*DR J.C. WATTS,*

*Consultant Anaesthetist, Burnley Health Care, NHS Trust.*

## And another one

*Sir,*

*As a surgeon the first column I read in the Eye is MD. I am afraid the most recent column irritated me. I think MD has begun to bark up the wrong tree.*

*MD deserves congratulations for his part in the exposure of the Bristol situation. I think however MD misses some of the wider implications. It is very easy to use the Bristol issue as a stick to beat surgeons with. Everyone accepts that the Bristol surgeons were at fault, and deserved their come-uppance. What MD misses by not looking further is that the biggest villain of the piece was the medical director who allowed the situation to develop, took totally inadequate steps (getting a failing surgeon to train his own replacement) to stop it, and then tried to cover the whole thing up.*

*It is unsurprising that the morale in the most recent unit to come under scrutiny is low. I would be surprised if it wasn't in all of them. After all who would want to be a paediatric cardiac surgeon in the current climate. There is now a growing problem generally with fear of litigation making surgeons increasingly unwilling to perform complex procedures. In the end it is patients who will suffer because no one will risk treating them.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*SIMON COLE,*

*Via e-mail.*

*PS: I wish MD would get back to bashing the system as he used to. In the hospital where I work as a surgical registrar in South-east London there is a bed crisis this August. The solution – to move to a new PFI hospital next July... with 50 fewer beds!*

## Lookalike

**Smith** **Gibbon**

*Sir,*

*I am sure your readers will agree there is an amazing resemblance between Edward Gibbon (writer) and Mel Smith, comedian.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*Sylvia Taylor*

*Chatham, Kent*

## We are a gay icon

*Sir,*

*I was astonished by the resemblance between Lady Thatcher and that famous stately homo, Quentin Crisp (Eye 983). Perhaps this gives new meaning to the old cry, "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie! Out, out, out!"*

*Yours faithfully,*
*K.F. JOHN,*

*London, E14.*

## Chinooks and corners

*Sir,*

*Although I have no interest in defending Chinook helicopters in particular, I was surprised at your correspondent's statement (Eye 983). Regarding the 116 serious accidents involving these helicopters, it is stated that "the vast majority of them cannot be blamed on the pilots..."*

*Air accident investigators lecture that 95 percent of all air accidents are caused by pilot error – so where does your correspondent get his/her information that things are different in those that fly Chinooks?*

*MARK WHITELEY,*

*Via E-mail*

## Dublin jeopardy

*Sir,*

*I read with interest your criticism of the funding of Dubbeljoint Theatre Company's plays at the West Belfast Festival by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (Eye 981). You will no doubt be aware that the Arts Council has just withdrawn significant revenue funding from Dubbeljoint towards their current anti-RUC festival production Forced Upon Us, co-produced with JustUs Community Group.*

*The Arts Council's justification for the withdrawal is poor artistic and management standards. Dubbeljoint believes it is political censorship.*

*The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is frightened of adverse publicity, especially from the national media. While Northern Ireland is a place of artistic excellence, there have been examples of poor artistic and management standards in the past and in all cases the Arts Council has never intervened. It is an act by a council motivated quicker by how it is perceived by others than by the art itself.*

*I disagree with your criticism against the council for funding the productions – in Northern Ireland we prefer political debates to take place through the arts rather than in the streets with guns and bombs, where there is no right of reply. Artistically speaking, the production, which I have seen and find offensive, is no worse than much theatre I have seen throughout the world. In this instance, however, I reserve my criticism for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for their obsession with their own self image and for their cowardice. We should be discussing both sides of the political argument, not just one, on the stage and not be concerned with how we are perceived when we do it.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*NAME SUPPLIED.*

## Labour's happy bunnies

*Sir,*

*Backbiter's waffle about London Labour's Greater London Assembly selections (Eye 983) was rich on conspiracy theory, but short of a few basic facts.*

*The point of having a meeting of constituency parties to allocate the seats was to ensure local parties were consulted on the important decision of who their candidates are for next May's Assembly elections. Because representatives from neither Brent nor Harrow were able to attend, it made sense to delay the final decision until activists had been notified of the ballot results and had agreed who stood where. This duly happened, Nicky Gavron and Toby Harris were happy with the outcome and the full list of candidates was duly announced, five days later.*

*Not quite so interesting as your account I know, but you clearly had a lot of space to fill during a quiet August.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*DAVID WILKINSON,*

*Acting Regional Director, Greater London Labour Party.*

*"Mum, can't we drive to school like everyone else...?"*

# I-SPY *New Jersey*

Submitted by **Tom Troscianko**. £10 paid for submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

## The great small ads debate

*Sir,*

*Unlike your correspondent Philip Peverley* (Eye *983), I do not object to the morality of the would-be adulterers in your small ads. But I do wish they were not illiterate. In the current issue, two of them are seeking a "discrete" relationship. That might be what they want, but I suspect they really mean "discreet". There's a high proportion of spankers, too.*

*Interestingly, these appear less prone to mis-spelling, perhaps by virtue of public school education.*

*Yours,*
*CHRIS GREY,*

*Via E-mail.*

*Sir,*

*Dr Peverley is technically correct when he says descriptions in* Eye *Love are "cheap, shallow and depressing".*

Eye *ads only reflect the reality of life in Britain where normal human beings have to invent all kinds of depressing ploys simply to find a partner of the opposite sex.*

*In this miserable island we should be grateful to the* Eye *for playing Cupid, albeit at a cost.*

*Yours,*
*S CARISCANT,*

*Runcorn, Cheshire.*

*Sir,*

*I find myself disagreeing strongly with Dr Peverley's attitude toward the advertising carried by your swollen organ. I myself find them of great interest and often highly useful in sourcing high quality vendors of specific services.*

*I now have met three charming young Russian ladies, have spent over £3,000 on cartoons of doubtful heritage and have the largest chatline phone bill in Europe. I console myself however in the knowledge that although I am riddled with gout from too much port, I can now listen to my e-mail as I mould a chocolate replica of my willy whilst flying over London in a helicopter.*

*I write this sheltering from the rain under my* Merde Il Pleut *umbrella, wearing a T shirt with a facsimile of my face by a leading caricaturist, while desperately trying to purify my urine after too much absinthe.*

*Must sign off as I'm due on my balloon flight with my remote-controlled fart machine. Hopefully that'll cure my impotence, premature hair-loss and eczema.*

*I remain Sir, a naturist speechwriter.*

*TIM ROSER,*

*Maresfield, East Sussex.*

*Sir,*

*I should like to point out that through the medium of* Eye *Love I was fortunate enough to meet the finest husband a woman could want, being, to quote Dr Peverley, "clever, funny, witty and (remarkably) upstanding" amongst his many other virtues.*

*As the husband in question is not of course my own, I will remain,*

*Yours initially,*
*CK,*

*West Yorkshire.*

## Hackneyed off

*Sir,*

*Lambeth's recently appointed Director of Social Services, Lisa Christensen, was not responsible for social services in Hackney* (Eye *983).*

*She is currently an Executive Director for Hackney Council and has covered social services for just a few weeks following the departure of the former director.*

*Hackney recognises that the children and families service needs to radically improve and will be advertising for a new director in the immediate future.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*SARAH EBANJA*

*Interim Managing Director, Hackney Council.*

## Birtwistle down the wind

*Sir,*

*Regrettably (given your excellent coverage of literature and the other arts) your music correspondent continues to show a degree of philistinism approaching that of the present government. In the article about "Sir Harrison Birtwhistle"* (sic)*, he or she accuses Pierre Boulez of paying Birtwistle a backhanded compliment in the recent BBC2 documentary about his music. The notoriously forthright Boulez is hardly capable of such dissimulation; and in any case, as eny fule kno, he's a great admirer of Birtwistle's music. And isn't it time to drop the childish expression "wrong-note composer" which invariably accompanies his name? Attack the dross, by all means, but dross Boulez ain't.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*THOMAS MORRIS,*

*Via E-mail.*

*"Yah – I'm getting a good, strong signal"*

## Colemanballs

*£10 paid for contributions*

**Sue McGregor**: *It depends, of course, how you define "homework".*
**Assn of Head Teachers' Rep:** *Well, most people would define homework as work that is done at home.*
**Radio 4**
(Gerald Hudson)

*"It's like the Somme in here. There's bits of cream cracker everywhere."*
**RICHARD EVANS, Radio 1**
(Graham Pikett)

*"...and today is the night."*
**DAVID COLEMAN, BBC**
(Mr R.G. Sfakianos)

*"He is like a guardsman. Every part of him erect."*
**HENRY BLOFIELD, Radio 4**
(Michael Cullen)

*"The spectators are jumping around like dervishes at a teddy bears' picnic."*
**RITCHIE BENAUD, C4**
(Jim Curran)

## Letter from **Istanbul**

### *from Our Own Correspondent*

**WITH up to 40,000 people dead, some half a million homeless and between 100,000 and 120,000 buildings destroyed or unsafe, Turkish health minister Osman Durmus acted with speed six days after the recent earthquake to get the rescue operation underway.**

Hitting the nail firmly on the thumb, he announced to journalists: "We don't want American doctors. We don't want Armenians, the foreign doctors are detrimental... and we don't want Greek blood transfusions in our veins."

Ordering out foreign rescue teams and turning back two US hospital ships heading for the crisis zone just days after Turkey had been hit by its worst earthquake in modern times, Durmus also found time to address the serious problem created by Italian busybody doctors who criticised the lack of sanitation provision for the thousands of homeless.

"The Italian doctors in Degirmendere (a Marmara coastal town which had been particularly badly hit) say that there is no toilet or shower there. But there is the sea behind them and there is the toilet of the mosque in front of them. They say the toilets in the mosque are dirty. Do they expect me to come and clean them?" The survivors must surely have taken heart at this, knowing that all they would have to do to get a good scrub was somehow brush aside the oil slick washing up on the sea behind them from the blazing refinery across the gulf of Izmit and off they could go. They would have been even more heartened to know that this oil slick, the one shown daily on TV and which booms from Britain were being used to try and contain, in fact simply did not exist. "There is no oil slick. No emissions at all have taken place," the environment ministry crisis desk declared comfortingly on 19 August.

This was probably because by then the fire that had been raging at the Izmit refinery was completely under control too. To demonstrate this, refinery officials gave reporters a tour of the plant on 21 August. It was of course a little unfortunate that during their soothing spiel a large tank of naphthalene detonated right behind them.

In a crisis though, it is said, the natural leaders emerge. Durmus, previously widely regarded as merely one dangerous lunatic in a party of dangerous lunatics, the ultra-right National Action Party, which is the second largest group in the present coalition government, had, it seemed, found his historic moment. Never before had a Turkish health minister been able to order the US navy around or get air time to tell the sinister truth about how Greek medical aid was about to poison the nation's vital bodily fluids.

Fortunately, neither the US navy nor the Greeks listened, and both continued to provide much needed aid. The Armenians were not so fortunate, as their search and rescue team — possibly one of the most experienced in the world after the devastating Armenian earthquake of 1988 — was refused entry into Turkey.

The volunteer Turkish rescue organisation AKUT was also roundly condemned by government officials in a move that probably saved thousands. "Their criticisms of the state are demoralising," said Turkish president Suleyman Demirel after AKUT volunteers had pointed out on television that no help had arrived from the state for up to 48 hours in towns such as Golcuk, 60 percent destroyed by the quake.

And those casualty figures themselves were not doing anyone any good either by being so large. After reaching 17,997 dead on the night of 24 August, survivors were suitably heartened to find when they woke the next morning that due to the efforts of the state rescue operation some 5,483 of these unfortunates had in fact miraculously got better. The death toll was proclaimed by prime minister Bulent Ecevit to be a mere 12,514 due to an official in Izmit overcounting in order to win more disaster relief.

Residents then speculated as to whether this trend might continue and in fact soon no one would have died at all, while smashed and ruined buildings would reassemble, as in a film played in reverse. This certainly seemed to be the feeling among Turkish parliamentarians, who, 10 days after the quake and in their last act before departing for their summer holidays, passed a law that will see charges of corruption against many of their number dropped while setting free many of the mobsters they have been associated with.

With some relief then, business is finally returning to normal.

# FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "My organisation is extremely embarrassed about this," confessed David Nowitz, marketing manager of the Society for Family Health in Johannesburg. "It is unthinkable that such a thing should have happened, and it flies in the face of everything we want to achieve."

Nowitz had earlier admitted that the society's recent Safe Sex campaign had greatly increased the danger of people contracting AIDS. "In association with the government, our organisation distributed tens of thousands of pamphlets in Zulu, Xhosa, English, Sotho, and Afrikaans, all featuring 'Johnny the Condom' and warning of the dangers of unprotected sex and unwanted pregnancy. A free government-issue condom was attached. Unfortunately we made a deal with a low-budget distribution company who were contracted to hand them out. For reasons we do not yet fully understand, they decided to staple each packet to the pamphlet and, of course, it perforated the condoms. These people are clearly morons, and we won't be using their services again.

"We became aware of the disaster two weeks ago, but it was too late to do anything about it, because the perforated condoms had already been distributed. I understand that the operator of the staple gun is an alcoholic with some sort of grudge. It's said that he is sterile. A sacking is in the air". *(The Saturday Argus, South Africa, 13/2/99. Spotter: Margaret Hoffenberg)*

—●—

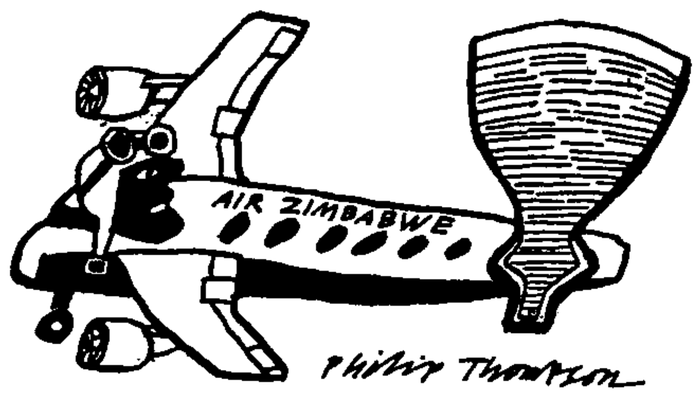
● *"Our flight from Kariba airport to Hwange was delayed, and it was three hours before Air Zimbabwe finally told us the plane was ready to board. It was dirty and ancient, and somebody made a joke about 'outside lavatories', but 90 of us eventually settled into the seats, and waited some more.*

*"Finally, the pilot's voice came over the loudspeaker. 'We're all ready to go, ladies and gentlemen. We've been waiting for the co-pilot, but he still hasn't arrived. However, as we've been waiting so long, we're just going to be flying without a co-pilot today. Rest assured, I have flown this route hundreds of times, we have clear blue skies, and there are no foreseeable problems.'*

*"Once the aircraft reached cruising altitude, the pilot came on the loudspeaker again. 'I am going to use the bathroom. I have put the plane on auto-pilot, and everything will be fine. I just don't want you to worry.' That said, he came out of the cockpit, fastened the door open with a rubber band to a hook in the wall, then went to the bathroom.'*

*"While he was gone, we hit a patch of turbulence, which caused the rubber band to snap off, and the door to swing shut. A moment later, the pilot came out of the bathroom, saw the closed door, and stopped cold. The stewardess came running up, and together they tried to open it, but it wouldn't budge. Cockpit doors lock automatically from the inside, to prevent terrorists from entering, and without a co-pilot, there was no one to open the door from the inside. Our pilot was locked out of the cockpit.*

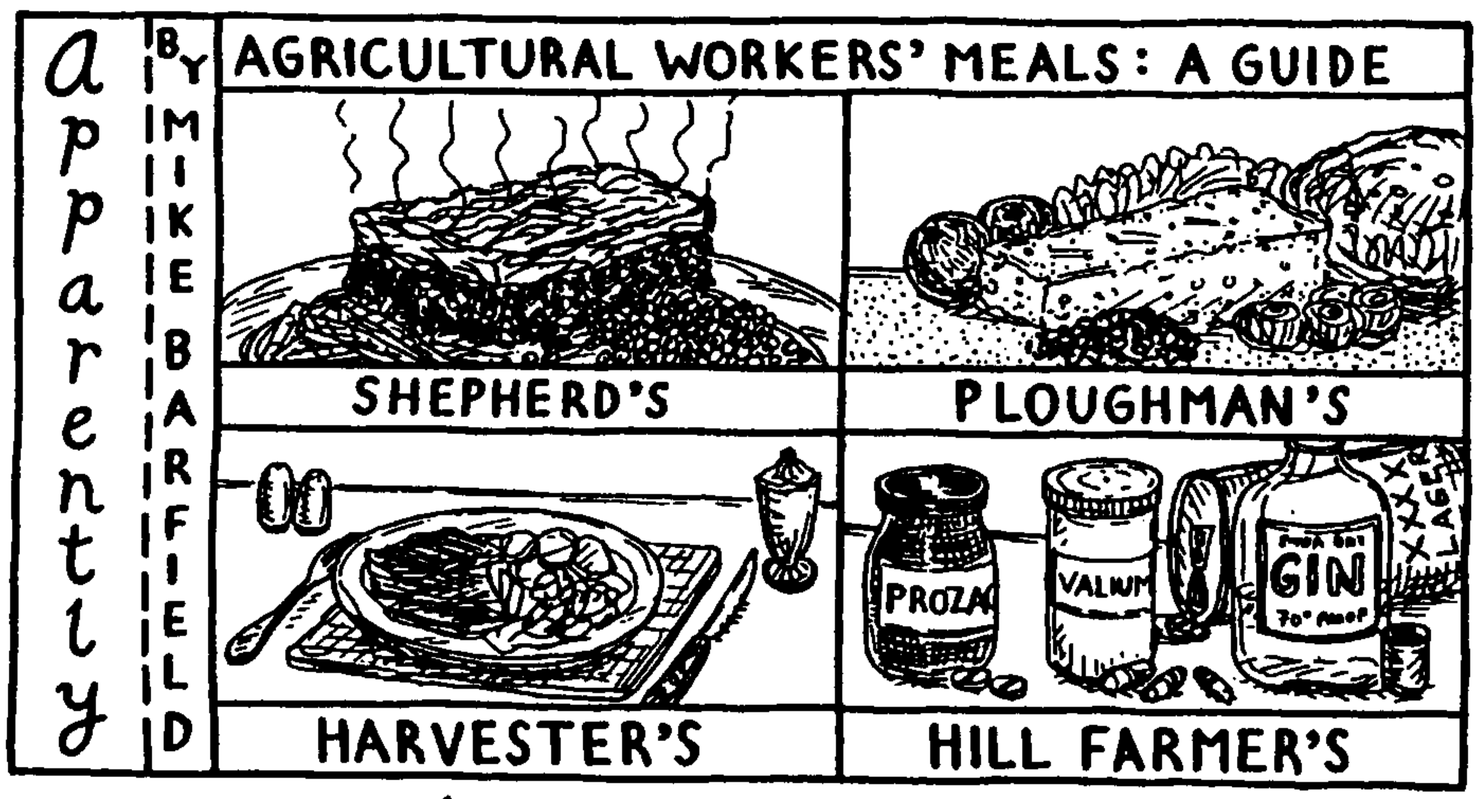
*"By now, the passengers were aware of the problem, and we watched the pilot, horrified. What would he do? After a moment of contemplation, he hurried to the back of the plane and returned with a large axe, and proceeded to chop down the cockpit door. Once he'd chopped a large hole, he reached inside, unlocked the door, and let himself in. Then he came on the loudspeaker, sounding a little shakier this time. 'Ah, ladies and gentlemen, we just had a little*




*problem there, but everything is fine now. We have plans to cover every eventuality, even pilots getting locked out of their cockpits. So relax, and enjoy the complementary nuts which I have asked my flight staff to distribute to you all. Roger and out'."* (Chicago Tribune, 6/6/99. Spotter: Andy Deakin)

—●—

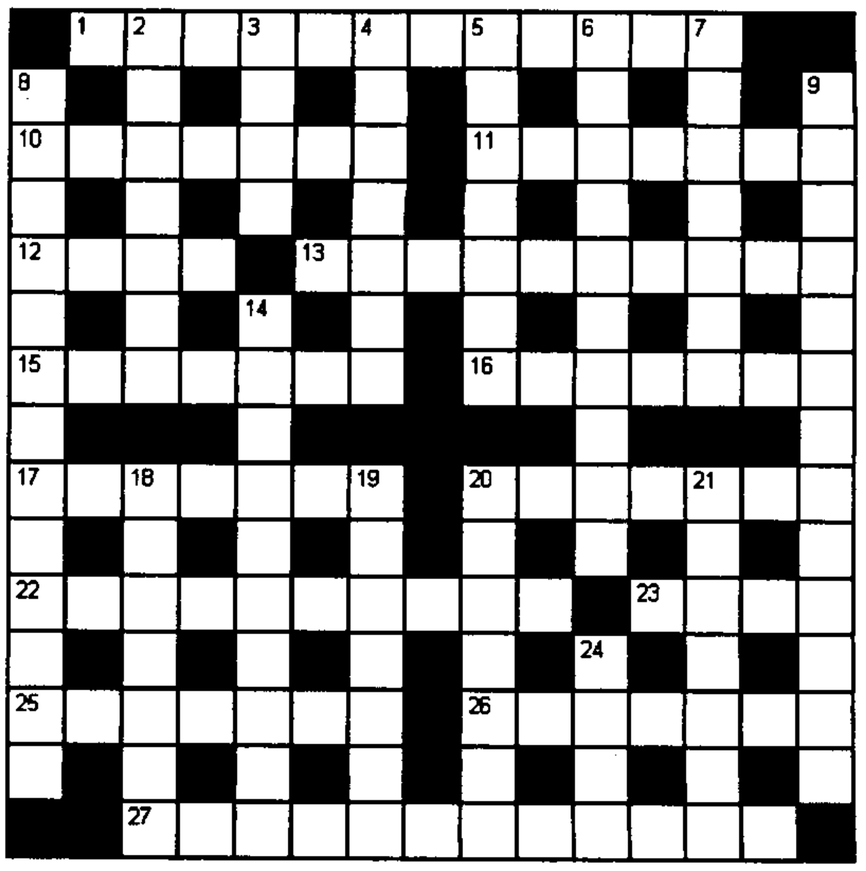
● **"It appears that the police superintendent believed apocalyptic predictions about the world coming to an end during the eclipse," said a spokesman for the Justice Minister of Paraiba Province, northeast Brazil. "He therefore took it upon himself on Tuesday to release all the prisoners from Picui prison, so they could enjoy the little time they had left on earth, before all life on the planet was wiped out. After releasing them from their cells, and telling them that the total eclipse signified the end of the world, he got drunk with them. By the time he had sobered up, the eclipse was over, the prisoners had vanished, and he was informed that he no longer worked for the Paraiba police force."** *(Jordan Times, 12/8/99. Spotter: Andrew Newman)*




# EYE CROSSWORD 139

by Cyclops

*£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Not overworking your favourite organ? That's good to see (4,2,3,3)
10 Inappropriate for Gnome to boast so? (4,3)
11 Bulky Brenda gets more superior (7)
12 Get sod all from an ambassador but resentment (4)
13 Those who look after a tabloid's astrologers (10)
15 Tory leader gets alternative haircut (abandoning on Sunday) – what a pain! (7)
16 Having an erection gobbling student-to-be gets you the axe! (7)
17 Blazer he shows member (7)
20 Sexual practice requiring restraint (7)
22 Hume started off arguing about one sounding off Paisley-style (10)
23 A convenience when one's removed from smart-arse organisation (4)
25 Grabbed by the boss, Sue is shaken and badly treated (7)
26 Brown-noser providing Tarzan's transport? (7)
27 Fail to meet rich new Rock 'n' Roller? (5-2,5)

DOWN

2 One has nothing to separate Left and Right, everything said and done (3,4)
3 Husband's strip a street greeting to buggers (4)
4 Getting thing out, that's a bedtime habit (7)
5 The old satirist's a pig – a right Hague at first (7)
6 Visually challenging magazine on shagging abroad (10)
7 Seen in context, remedy is severe (7)
8 The scandalous way in which we make press revelations (6,2,5)
9 Mad old luvvies's assistants – the sort who select inappropriate gear? (5-8)
14 Auntie has rescheduled start of *Airport* – a merciful release! (10)
18 Stops dancing stars holding Brenda up (7)
19 Skirted, curvy journalist (7)
20 Policeman with a hunch he's dishonest? (4,3)
21 Dotty, dear Phil dropping clanger finally in theatre (7)
24 Vulgar those people interrupting party rally (4)

**£100 prize to first solution opened on 10.9.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.**

## Solution to Crossword No. 138

**Winner: GODFREY GUDGEON**

ACROSS: 1 Aspect 4 Ferguson 10 Swear-word
11 Arrow 12 Pungent 13 (see 29) 14/31/9 Janet Street-Porter
16 Reshuffle 19 Royal Mail 22 Evens 23 Slapper
25 Gorilla 28 (see 29) 29/28/13 Docklands Light Railway
30 Merry men 31 (see 14 ac.)

DOWN: 1 Aesop 2 Pregnancy 3 Curse 5 Endures
6 Gratitude 7 Straw 8 Newly-weds 9 (see 14 ac.)
14 Jerusalem 15 Telepathy 17 Eli 18 Freelance 20 Abridge
21 Legacy 24 Anger 26 Relet 27 Asset

# Bill Deedes Remembers the Dramatic Events of Thirty Years Ago

I WELL remember the day in 1969 when Monty Python broke out. Few of us who were alive at that time can forget that momentous event when the man with the moustache and the silly walk said the immortal words: "This parrot is dead."

The nation shook its head in disbelief as it realised we were in for ten dark years living in fear of a nightly barrage of lumberjack *songs*, cheese shop references and men dressing up as women and taking their clothes off.

When the alarm sounded ("And now for something completely different") and the militaristic strains of the Souza march began we all ran down to the shelters to sit out the next thirty minutes.

Only when the All Clear sounded ("The Python team will be back next week with some more zany, madcap humour") could Britain return to normal life.

But our spirits were undaunted. "Britain can take it" was the universal cry. As one old chap said: "We survived Arthur Askey and his chums, we can survive this."

**TOMORROW:** Bill Deedes remembers the night the "Flying Sheep" sketch bombed.

World of Soccer

# KNEE RESIGNS AFTER GAMBLE GOES WRONG

By E.I.Erewego, our man at Glyndebourne with the fold-up table and the rug from the gift shop.

**THE soccer world was rocked to its foundation when "Rude" Knee, Neasden's tight-lipped and ashen-faced supremo walked out.**

## DREAD SHOCK

This followed his disastrous gamble against fellow relegation strugglers Dollis Hill, when he omitted all eleven players from the Neasden team.

Dollis Hill were amazed to find that no one was facing them when referee Sid Himmler blew the whistle and they immediately scored 500 goals.

## BITING THE GULLIT

"The idea was to surprise the opposition" said Rude, "which it did. If we had won 500 – nil I would have been hailed as a hero. But that is football. You win some and you lose some. Or, in my case, you lose them all."

Roon Knee is 59.

### Late Score

*Ashcroft Office Cleaning International Charity Shield (Second Leg)*

Surreal Madrid .....10
(Dali 4, Magritte 3, De Chirico 2, Melting Watch O.G)
Neasden .....0

## A Cabbie writes

Every week a well known taxi-driver comments on an issue of national importance.

This week **John Humphrys** (Radio Cab No.4).

Blimey guv! That news programme on the telly – it's rubbish isn't it? Just garbage! I remember in the old days they had real news on it – you know, the war and who won the FA Cup, but nowadays – blimey!

Did you see the other night they had some toddler who lost his budgie – and they put that right up the top! Makes you want to weep – when you think of all the terrible things that are going on in the world like in you know – wherever it is where what's his name is up to something – No I blame John Birt he should be strung up to my mind. It's the only language people like him understand.

Nowadays when I see the news come on I tell the wife I'm going to go out in the cab for an hour...

I had that Harriet Harman in the back of the cab once, I tell you guv, I gave her a real earful!

*NEXT WEEK:* **Pete Hitchens** *(Cab No. 75623) on why the country has gone to the dogs.*

# Traditional Folk Ballad

***D'ye ken John Peel at the end of the day,***
***D'ye ken John Peel with his beard so grey,***
***D'ye ken John Peel who is far, far away***
***The most boring thing ever on Radio One.***

**(As heard on BBC Radio's "Folk me, it's another programme with John Peel in it.")**

# POETRY CORNER

**Lines on the decision to drop the OXO family from television advertising.**

So, farewell
Then
The OXO family.
Mum, Dad
And the three
Kids.

"Mmm, this Shepherd's
Moussaka is delicious
Mum."

"It's all
Thanks to OXO."

Yes, that was
Your catchphrase.

But now research
Shows that
Families no longer
Sit round the
Table.

They are too
Busy watching
Terrible adverts on
The telly.

But not the
OXO ad,
Obviously.

E.J.Thribb
(MA OXO) 17½

# The Archer

## (Omnibus Edition)

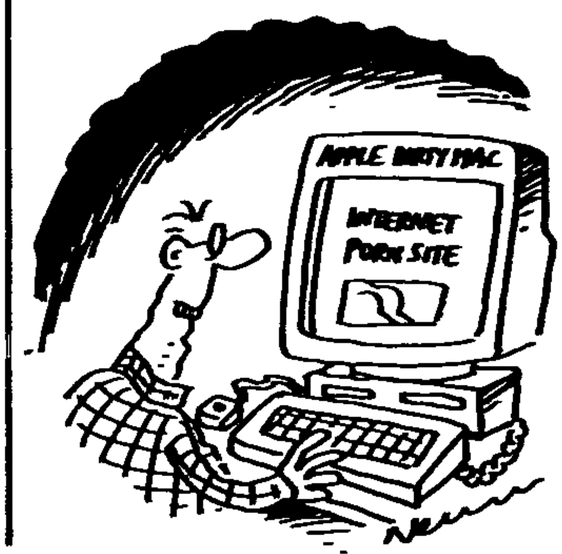
Jeff is continuing his campaign to be Mayor of Ambridge and support comes from an unexpected and not entirely welcome quarter – Old Mag, the mad bag lady.

She has said she'll vote for him and this has put the cat among the pigeons down at the village pub, Old Bullshit.

Ken thought it was in the bag even though Tony had said he wouldn't support him. The village's only Afro-Caribbean resident, Trevor, had high hopes himself.

But with Old Mag giving Jeff her backing, the picture looks far from clear.

Stay tuned to *The Archer*, an everyday story of cunts (*surely "country folk"? Ed*).



# ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

*Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)*

Hello,

It always takes a bit of adjustment when you come back from your holidays, doesn't it? It's hard to get back into the routine when you've been having a nice time in the sunshine and you have to come back to the rainy weather and the same old problems that haven't gone away – or may even have got worse if the person you left in charge wasn't up to it.

And it doesn't help when people begrudge you even your hard-earned holiday.

"Why can't the vicar go to Butlins at Skegness?" asks one parishioner. "Why can't he pay for his own holiday like the rest of us?" asks another.

Honestly! You only have to look at the Good Book to see how Our Lord himself gladly accepted the hospitality of rich supporters. Even his tomb itself was provided by a wealthy businessman. Look! All your vicar was doing was being polite in taking up a few modest offers from well-wishers in Italy and France. Remember the words of the Gospel, "In my friend's house there are many rooms and they are yours for the summer." (The Cook of St Thomas 7.13)

And as for those of you who complained about Cherie and me going to watch the famous horse-race in Siena on the grounds that it is cruel – well, what can I say?

It would look pretty churlish to criticise the age-old customs and traditions of your host country. Just imagine if I invited my Italian counterpart to go to a fox-hunt and he refused on the grounds that it was cruel?

Imagine how well that would go down?

And, anyway, it was a marvellous spectacle to see the red team come in way ahead of the useless blue team under their leader Williama di Tori whose horse gave way under him on the first corner, much to the delight of the onlookers!

So, the moral is surely "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." (Romans, 7.18)

Now, closer to home. I was extremely saddened to find that in my absence the Poor Box in the church had been broken into and the lead taken from the roof. It is not for me to

point the finger of suspicion, but it is surely no coincidence that a party of gypsies have recently camped on the wasteland on the other side of the cemetery.

Mr Straw from the Neighbourhood Watch said it was bound to be them, as it always was. I told him that this was not exactly a Christian sentiment but was one with which, nevertheless, it was hard to disagree.

It is not for me to tell parishioners what to do, but it is surely time to band together and persuade the gypsies to move on somewhere else.

Yours,

Tony

## *To Remember In Your Prayers*

Poor Miss Widdecombe, a single lady who lives alone with her old mother and who has been making a nuisance of herself in the parish, accosting Mr Straw and others in the course of their work, shouting obscenities and talking nonsense loudly to herself.

She has even written a poison pen letter to the vicarage accusing the Vicar of "scrounging off foreigners". Obviously, I have forgiven her (and merely reported her to the police), but I can see that it must be very annoying for everyone else.

So we pray that this poor, distressed lady, who has sadly not been blessed with good looks, may find some useful occupation for her undoubted energy. Perhaps she might stay at home and receive counselling over the internet.
T.B.

## *Mrs Jay, Matron of the St Albion's Home for Distressed Gentlefolk, writes:*

*Plans for the new-look Home are moving along apace, I am pleased to report. Long-term residents have been asked to complete the following sentence in not more than 75 words: "I think I should be allowed to stay on at the home because..."*

*This will soon sort out the deserving from the undeserving, some of whom are so far gone they cannot remember their own names, let alone write them.*

*Hint: Only three words are actually needed to complete the sentence: "I love Tony".*

*Mrs Jay*
*(Daughter of the Reverend Callaghan)*

## WARNING

**Could the younger members of the parish please leave Mr Monsanto's allotment *alone*!! He is experimenting with some new seeds which could be of great benefit to rich people throughout the world. So keep off! Okay?! T.B.**

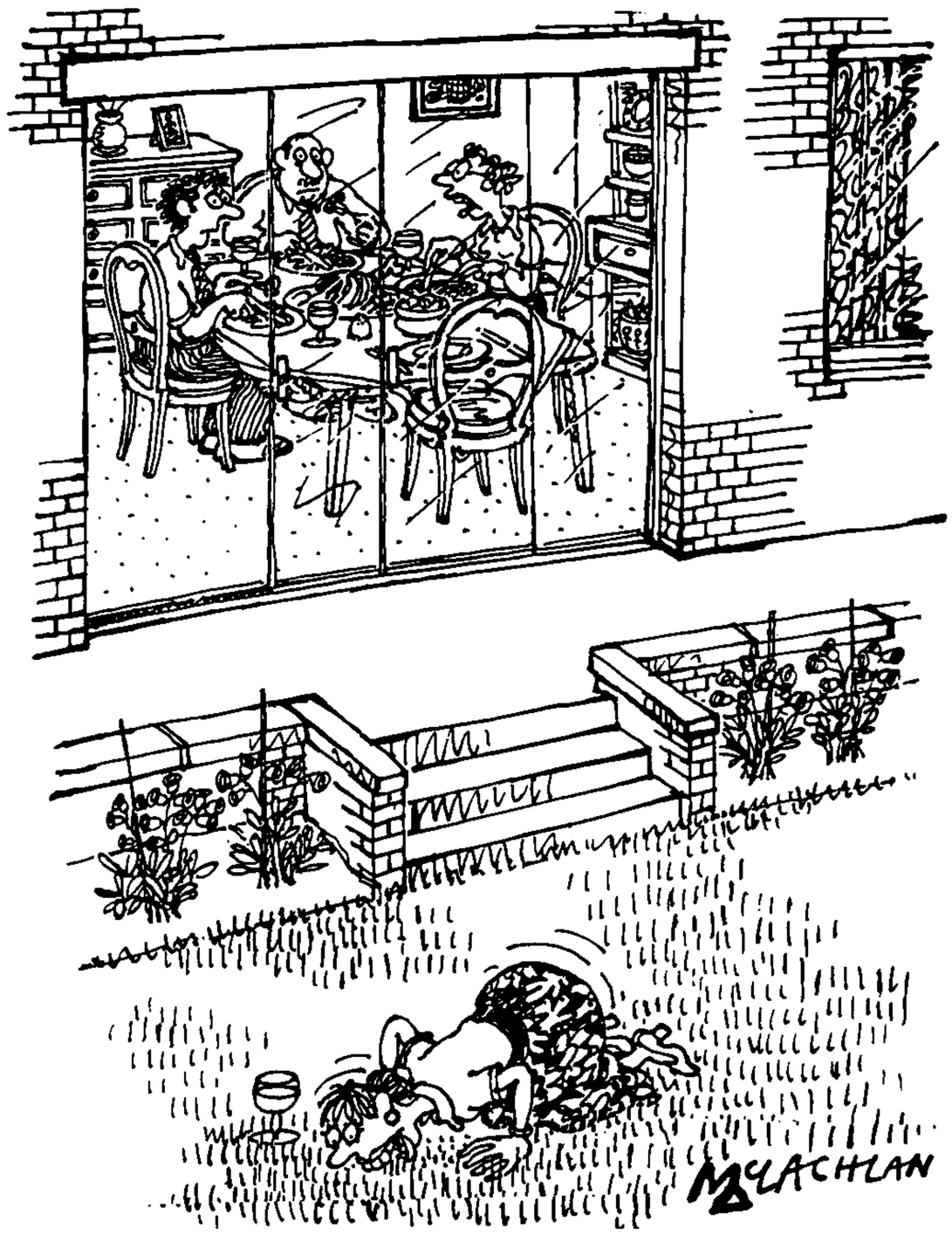
## Parish Postbag...

*Dear Sir,*

*As a long-standing and vewy important pawishioner may I congwatulate the Vicar on his choice of an agweeable holiday destination in Tuscany. What would people think of the Vicar and his delightful wife, Chewie, were they to go to some dweadful bed and bweakfast in Wamsgate full of working class wiff-waff? Surely it would weflect badly on the whole pawish?*

*Yours sincerely,*
*Mr Woy Jenkins.*
*St Twopez.*

This letter was transcribed from my answering machine by my secretary. It has been included in its entirety, as are all letters defending the vicar.
Alastair Campbell, Editor.




*"Your new girlfriend's a strict vegetarian isn't she?"*

# FRENCH JUDGE BRIBED BY DUKE OF EDINBURGH

by Mirror Reporter **Pierre Moron**

**THE FRENCH judge investigating the death of the late Princess Diana accepted a massive bribe of £200 million, according to sources close to Harrods Boss Mohammed Fayed.**

The Duke's aim apparently was to cover up the real facts of her death, ie that she was murdered by the SAS disguised as MI5 photographers using a nuclear-powered Fiat Uno with James Bond-style laser headlights that vanished into outer space following the fatal gamma ray execution of the Princess.

**COMPLETE RUBBISH**

As a result of the Duke's bung, say sources, the judge came up with a ludicrous theory that the accident occurred because the car's driver had been drunk and the passengers had not been wearing seat-belts.

The Daily Tuscangraph

# "Send Travellers Home" say locals

by Our Go Home Affair Staff **Barry Fantoniblair**

THERE WERE angry calls last night for a family of immigrants to be repatriated immediately, after they had swamped a Tuscan Palazzo with their assorted children and hangers-on.

The Blairs had been living in housing paid for by local tax-payers since their arrival.

"They are just spongers" said local spokesman Giacomo Strani. "They come over here supposedly seeking 'sanctuary' and what do they do? Strut around as if they own the place and abuse our hospitality."

**BEYOND THE PALIO**

However, it seems that the protestors have succeeded at least partially in their demands, since the travellers have moved on to Southern France where they are squatting in an agreeable villa belonging to someone else.

## COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Her Majesty the Queen had an audience with Ms Glenda Slagg from the Mail on Sunday newspaper in which she let it be known that the Princess Margaret had better pull herself together and stop malingering or she would find herself without a penny.

KENSINGTON PALACE

Her Royal Highness the Princess Margarita has let it be known that her sister is getting on her wick and can go and jump in one of her many lakes.

ST JAMES'S PALACE

The Mistress Royal, Camilla Parker-Bowles, has left for a holiday. She will be attended by Dame Joanna Lumley for a week of shopping and boozing in the Mediterranean.

## Jobs Wanted

**EXPERIENCED** former Trade Secretary seeks important post commensurate with his skills. Would consider anything so long as it is in the Cabinet – Defence, Northern Ireland, Culture. Salary in the region of £150,000 per annum with car and interest-free loan on house. Apply in confidence to Peter M., Notting Hill, London.

**EXPERIENCED** former Defence Secretary and Hospital Porter seeks important post commensurate with his skills. Would consider anything so long as it is leader of the Conservative Party. Apply in confidence to Michael P., Villa Franco, Spain.

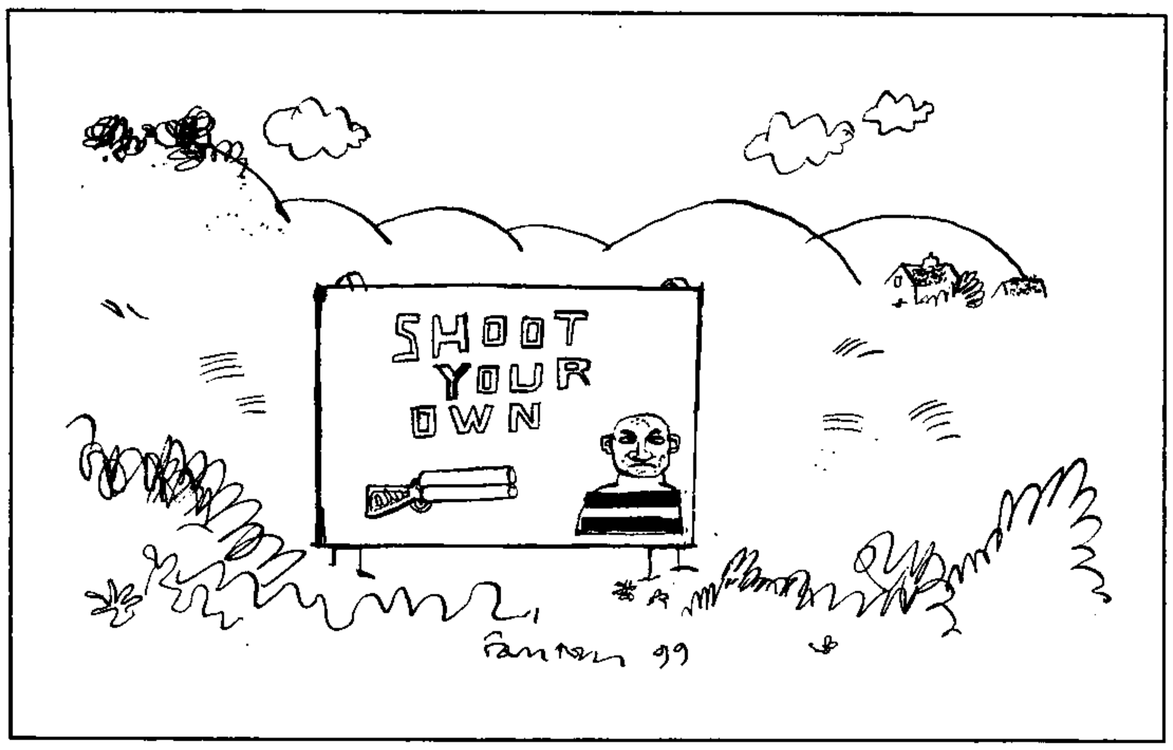
**HORSE SHARE.** Kind sensible adult required to ride well behaved school mistress. Stabled Bromley.

*Beckenham News Shopper*

Celeb

LIGGER

WOW! THANKS TO THE WONDERS OF CLONING AND GENETICS THEY CAN NOW MAKE A PERFECT CLONED HUMAN NOSE!
NEWS
WITH IDENTICAL GENETIC MAKE-UP IT COULD BE TRANSPLANTED AS A REPLACEMENT WITH NO FEAR OF REJECTION.
MIGHT COME IN HANDY FOR YOU ONE DAY, GARY. I MEAN, YOUR SCHNOZZLE'S ON IT'S LAST LEGS.
NAH! I'M DEAD AGAINST GENETIC ENGINEERING IN PEOPLE. THERE'S NO WAY I'D HAVE A CLONED HUMAN NOSE.
WOULDN'T SAY NO TO AN ANT-EATER'S ONE THOUGH.
SNORT
SUCK




# POLLY FILLER IN FRANCE

So, it's perfect. It's just me, the birds, the moon – and, of course, the wretched nanny banging about in the kitchen and ruining the atmosphere.

HONESTLY, you'd think these girls would be grateful. They get their travel paid and a chance to have a two-week holiday playing with the children and helping a bit around the gîte. Not terribly demanding, is it? A bit of cooking, laundry, childcare, babysitting, cleaning the pool and an hour or two a day unblocking the fosse septique!

And yet they still manage to look as grumpy as they do stuck at home in London.

Things must be pretty marvellous back in Macedonia if our girl can't summon up the energy to smile occasionally and cook for the odd dinner party when the editor of this paper and his friends drop in from across the valley.

Still, one mustn't complain (as I tell her or she'll be sacked) and, as I pour myself another glass of the local plonk, I thank my lucky stars I'm not back in England like my colleagues, slaving away at a laptop and desperately churning out copy to fill space in August.

*Polly Filler is on holiday.*

AS I sit here in the middle of the beautiful French countryside I wonder what could be more perfect?

The toddler, Charlie, has finally been put to bed – quite why the nanny lets him stay up so late on holiday is beyond me. I'll have to have a word with the stupid girl later when she's finished doing the washing-up.

Meanwhile, I'm spared the company of the useless Simon, since he's gone to Le Bar in the village to drink himself stupid on Pastis and watch tractor-racing from Nîmes on Canal Plus Sportif 7.

# BEST EVER EXAM RESULTS

## Blunkett Denies Dumbing Down Charge

by Our Education Staff **GCSE Pass**

**IN a move to counter allegations that the GCSE examinations had been made easier to secure a greater number of passes, the education secretary today released a specimen paper to show that the standard was "as high as ever, if not higher".**

### **GCSE Maths** Multiple Choice

You may use a calculator or ask your teacher the answers.

❶ Fill in the missing number from this sequence: 1, 2, 3, 4, —, 6, 7
Is it: **a)** 5
**b)** 217
**c)** Oasis Greatest Hits.

❷ Look closely at this week's winning Lottery numbers. If they are the same as yours, you won't ever have to worry about exams again.

Time allowed: 2 years


## ANNOUNCEMENT

THERE are still some places available for students on the following courses:

**AROMATHERAPY (with Crop Circle Studies),**
**Neasden University** *(formerly Brent Cross Polytechnic)*

**BATMAN STUDIES (with French),**
**The University of the Trossachs**
*(formerly Glenmiller Academy)*

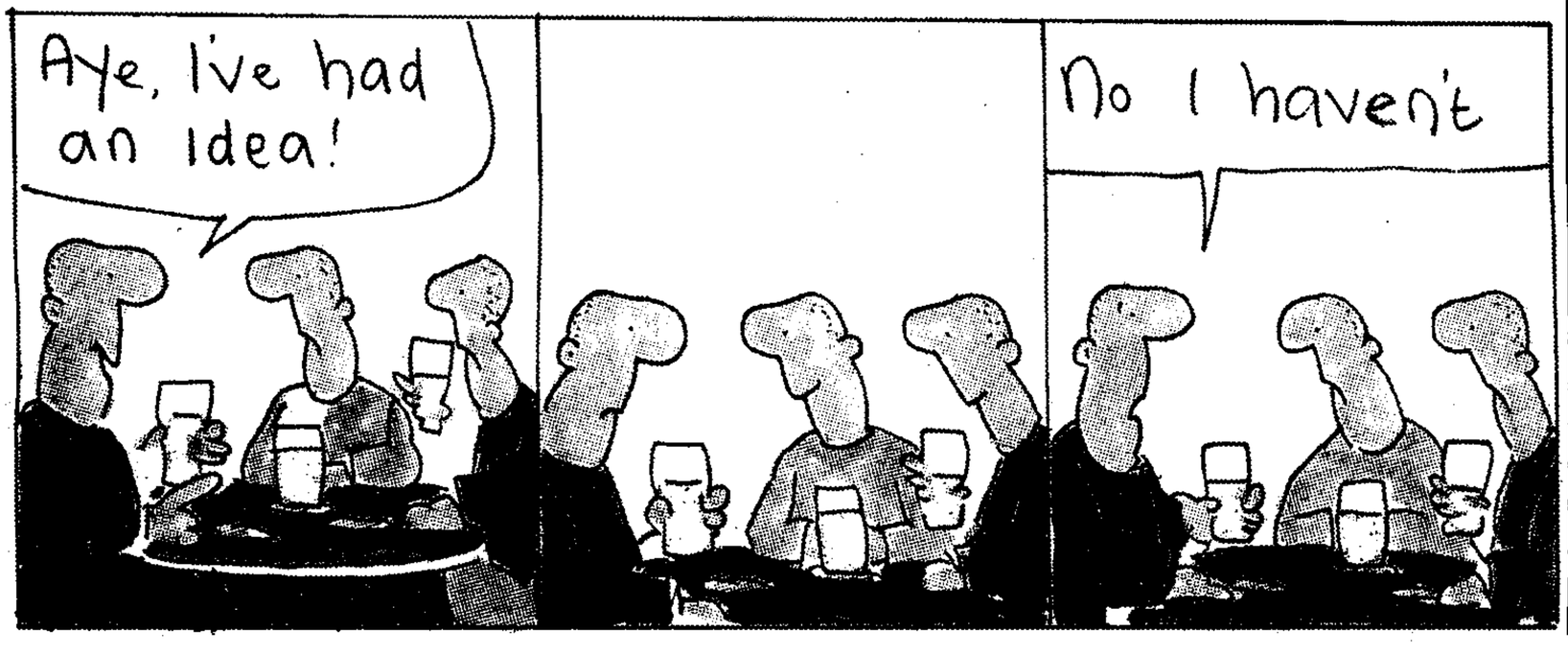
**CULINARY MAINTENANCE AND MODERN GREEK,**
**University of Canvey** *(formerly The South End Institute of Catering)*

**DIANA STUDIES (with Frisbee),**
**University of Chelsea** *(formerly The Harbour Club)*

**EXOTIC SUBSTANCES AND YODELLING,**
**University of Yeovil** *(formerly Paddy Ashdown Polytechnic)*

**Minimum Entry Grades: 2 Fs.**


HUSBAND





# A PRIVATE EYE ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

## 100 WAYS TO REMEMBER DIANA

1. Read the papers
2. Er...
3. That's it.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

# Letters to the Editor

## The Sad Demise of English Cricket

SIR – There can be no doubt as to what lies behind our recent humiliating defeat at the hands of the New Zealanders.

Not so long ago the sight of small boys playing with bat and ball and a crude wicket chalked up on the wall was familiar to us all.

The cries of "Howzat" echoed across city street and village lane. It is no wonder that we produced such greats as F.J. Plard, Sir Wilfred Pugwash and, more recently, Nottinghamshire's Ian Snote.

But now, thanks to out-of-town supermarkets, there are no playing fields on which our youngsters can hone their skills with willow and leather.

Only when the government outlaws traffic on Britain's streets can we hope to retain our rightful position as the world's greatest cricketing nation.

REV. C.J. BARKWORTH,
The Knights Templar
Retirement Home,
Malta.

SIR – There can be no doubt that if there is one single factor behind the collapse of our beloved national game of cricket it is the fear amongst the general public of the omni-present paedophile.

There was a time when small boys felt free to take off their jerseys and use them as wickets without some evil paedophile lurking behind a tree.

But now, thanks to the inaction of the police force and the laissez-faire Sixties morality of successive governments, no boy dares play cricket in public – with the lamentable results we have seen this summer.

COLONEL L.B.W. BONKERS,
The Long Room,
Hutton St Leonard,
Dorset.

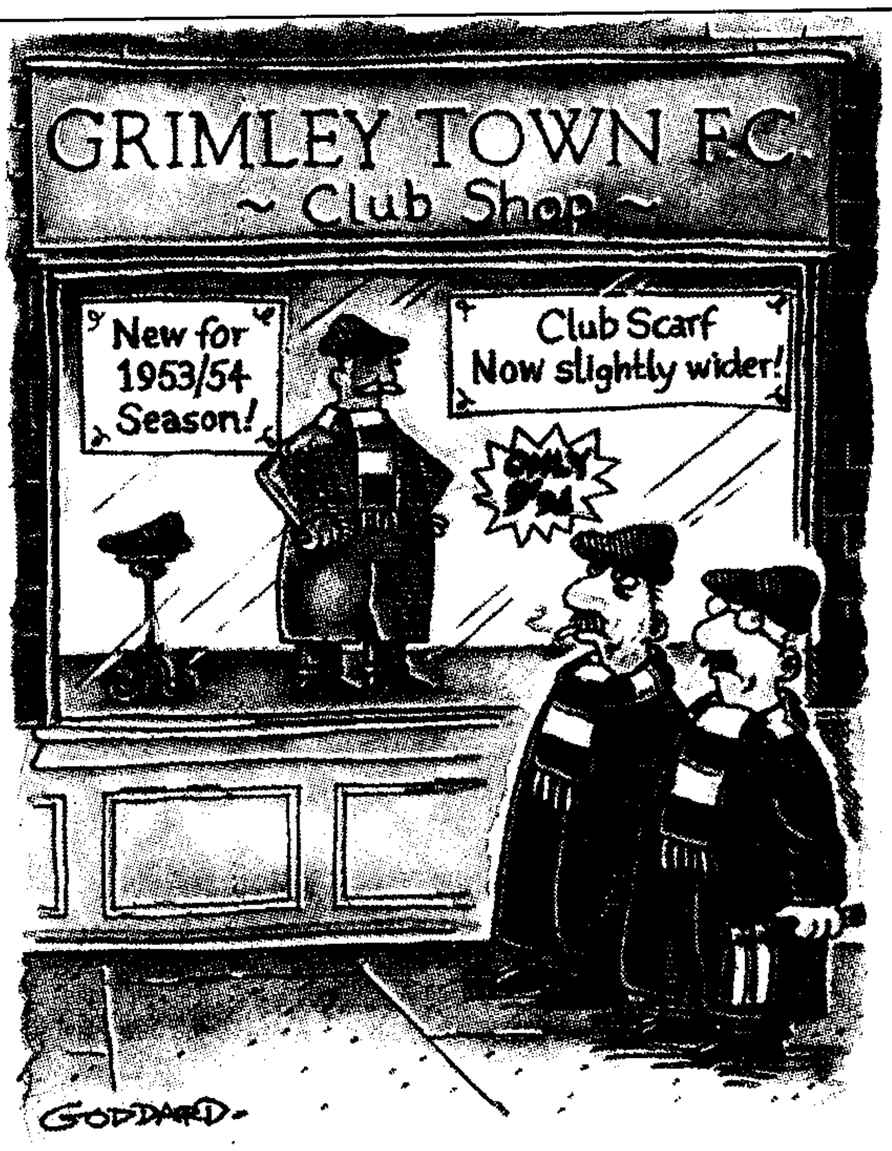
SIR – Surely there is a simple explanation as to why Messrs Hussein, Atherton, Ramprakash et al lost the series against New Zealand. It is because they were no good!

DAVE BLIMEY,
via e-mail.

SIR – There is nothing new in the present sad plight of the England Cricket XI. One only has to go back to the summer of 1837 when the national side under Captain Major Wilberforce Farrah-Hockley failed to score a single run in five test matches against the visiting team from the Pitcairn Islands. Yet, in the following year under their new captain, the Maharajah of Vindaloo, England defeated what was possibly the strongest cricket team ever fielded by Tibet by a margin of three games to two – and all this despite bowling figures of 6-984 by the Dalai Lama!

So, let the England selectors take heart. We may have lost the battle but it is always darkest before the dawn!

SIR REGINALD TRUSSET,
"Maidenover",
Batting Average,
Somerset.




**Early football merchandising**

# BLONDE WOMAN'S FRIEND HAS WATCH STOLEN

by **R.O. Lex**

YESTERDAY a blonde woman's friend had his watch stolen. She was said to be "upset".

# BLONDE WOMAN WHO WAS GOING TO GET MARRIED CHANGES MIND

by **Tara Boomdiaye**

A BLONDE woman who had planned to marry her fiancé has broken it off, saying she didn't want to get married after all. Said a close friend of the woman who was going to be wed: "It looks as if she won't be getting married after all."

**NOT ON OTHER PAGES**
**40,000 die in earthquake.**

# HOW TO PLAY CRICKET-THE ENGLAND WAY

DEALING WITH BOUNCERS
BAR
LET ME IN! I'M BATTING TOMORROW AND I NEED A SKINFULL.
GOING FOR SINGLES
STUFF THE LAGER MATE, GIVE US A SCOTCH!
COOPER
GETTING STUCK IN
HAVEN'T YOU LOT GOT HOME TESTS TO GO TO?
HE'S LEGLESS BEFORE WALKOVER!
AVOIDING BEING CAUGHT
OH NO! THE PRESS ARE OUTSIDE.
CLIMB OUT THE TOILET WINDOW!
HE'S OUT!

# HOW SHOULD WE REMEMBER HER?

**IT IS two days since the nation was plunged into irreversible grief at the news of the death of Tara Palmer Tomkinson's engagement to Gregory Martin.**

One minute she was a happy, smiling, carefree woman who seemed to embody all the hopes and aspirations of a generation of young women. Her face on the front of a magazine was guaranteed to make readers ask "Who's that?" *(Surely "Sell a million copies?" Ed.)*

● How then should we commemorate this beautiful, bewitching, tortured, charismatic *(Get on with it. Ed.)*

Here are the top ten suggestions so far to ensure that Tara's name lives for ever.

**1. Commemorative restaurant in Sloane Square to be named "Chez Tara".**

**2. Equestrian statue of Tara to occupy the empty plinth in Trafalgar Square.**

**3. Memorial tree to be planted in Kew Gardens by the Duke of Edinburgh.**

**4. Tara Day, August 24th, to become a national holiday** *(England and Wales only)*.

**5. Sir Elton John to perform special commemorative song in Westminster Abbey, "I'm not getting married in the morning".**

**6. Tower of London to be renamed "Tara London".**

**7. Er...**

**8. That's it.**

The following dignitaries have agreed to sit on the Memorial Committee and have an agreeable lunch *(Surely "decide on a suitable memorial"? Ed.)*: Lord Deedes, Lord Jenkins, Simon Jenkins, Lord Rees-Mogg, Sir Paul Condon, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Dame Joanna Lumley.

**● What's your idea for the Tara Memorial? Phone our Tara Hotline 008984 72324.**

# Amazing Archaeological Find

## Egyptian Treasures Unearthed

by Our Excavation Staff *Alexandria Shulman*

A CHANCE stumble by an Egyptian maize farmer's donkey has unearthed what experts are calling the most important treasure trove of the century.

Not since Lord Carnarvon gazed in rapture upon the golden face of Tutankhamun has such a priceless horde of old rubbish been discovered.

For what the donkey uncovered was nothing more nor less than the long lost treasure of Mohammed Fayed the First, the so-called Phoney Pharaoh, who ruled the Kingdom of Harrods two millennia after Christ.

### VALLEY OF THE DUMMIES

According to the leader of the excavation team, "What we have discovered are millions of unsold copies of the humorous magazine Punch, perfectly preserved in the sand for a period of many months."

He continued, "It is an eerie feeling picking up a copy of the magazine and handling history. It is incredible to think that this garbage was written all those weeks ago and now here it is in pristine condition in this vast chamber."

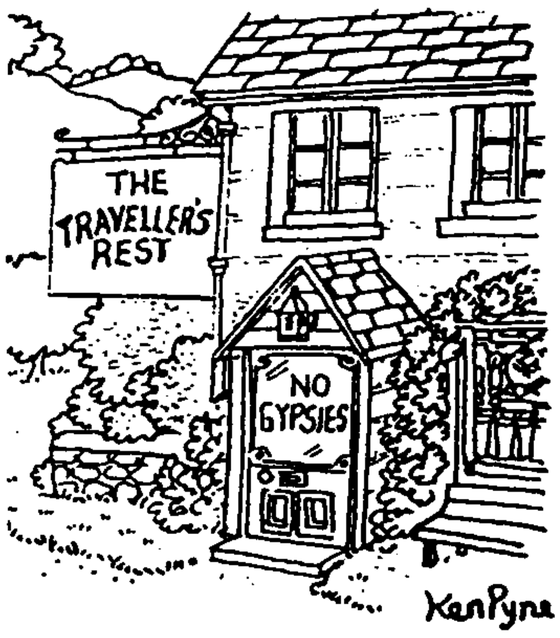
**FACT:** The Phoney Pharaoh was a man of fabulous wealth who was buried under tons of old newsprint.

But few seem to realise that looking at an eclipse with the naked is dangerous;

*The Lady*

## HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

JEFFREY BERNARD LIVES!
YOU WERE A COMPLETE PRICK THEN, AND YOU ARE A COMPLETE PRICK NOW! DID YOU YOU EVER BUY A ROUND?! YOU'RE THE MOST BORING MAN IN THE WHOLE FUCKING WORLD!
GET IT RIGHT!
SILLY COW!
I HATED JOKES!
YOU WERE THE BIGGEST CUNT I EVER MET!
ANY CHANCE OF A FUCKING DRINK, NORMAN! ICE!! I WANT MORE ICE! IN MY VODKA!
SAME ALL ROUND, IT'S MY SHOUT.
JUST THE ONE
HE WAS A GREAT FRIEND
I WISH HE WAS HERE NOW, I'D TELL HIM JOKES, HE LIKED JOKES
YOU'RE BARRED!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LOVE! HAVE YOU EVER WOKEN UP CRYING? WELL HAVE YOU?
CHEERS! TO THE VEFF I LOVED!
HE USED TO CALL ME A CUNT BUT HE DIDN'T MEAN IT
YOU KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOUVE GOT NO GUTS!
I MISS HIM
JEFF BIN IN?
HEATH




## THE ALTERNATIVE VOICE

***ROMANY SPART** is Co-Chair of The Right To Romany Freedom Committee, C/o Crouch End Social Security Office.*

**THE Home Secretary has failed to understand the historical significance and age-old traditions of travelling persons of Romany origin with his utterly racist attack reminiscent of Hitler at his worst who as is well-known exterminated millions of travellers er... the suggestion that the travelling community are guilty of petty crime and disruption of non-itinerant communities is nothing less than institutional racism reminiscent of Adolf Hitler er... Jack Straw should be persecuted at once by a Nuremberg style tribunal for crimes against humanity and attempted genocide just because an unrepresentative majority break into cars and er...** ***(cont. p. 94)***

*"Ow no, spoilt me combat trowsis"*

## Late News

# IRA TO BE REFORMED?

**LEAKED proposals for sweeping reforms to the IRA – including changing its name and uniform – have thrown the organisation into chaos, it was reported last night.**

Said a supporter of the proposed reforms: "We want to get rid of some of the things which people associate with the old IRA, such as the balaclava, the tricolour and the Armolite rifle."

However, supporters of the IRA argue that it would be unfair to expect the terrorist force to abandon so much of its history. Said one, "How can we effectively police the province if people suspect that the IRA has gone soft?" *(Reuters).*

## *The Wedding of the Century*

**Fat Boy Slim**

**Zoe Ball**

### How They Are Related

Fatty Arbuckle
|
Fats Domino
|
Slim Whitman
|
Fatima Whitbread
|
Fat Boy of the Remove
|
Fat Boy George
|
Slim Boy George
|
Fatwah Boy Salman
|
Fat Boyzone

Lucille Ball
|
Desi Arnaz Junior
|
Canon and Ball
|
Kenny Ball
|
His Jazzmen
|
Terry Major-Ball
|
The Rt. Hon. John Major-Ball MP
|
Johnny Ball
|
Zoe Heller

THE TIMES

## *Libby Purves*

SHE's fat, she's feisty, she's fun and she's fifty. And she doesn't give a damn about clothes or make-up. She tells the truth as it is. And she makes the men around her look pathetic. I say hats off to myself, I mean, Ann Widdecombe *(cont'd. p. 94)*

THE SPECTATOR

## Saki

EVERYONE says I should be sacked. So the poor little Greek boy has been sacked. I blame the darkies and the Jews.

PS. I haven't been sacked actually, it was a joke. (Will this do? T.T.)

*Yes, it's awfully good. B.J.*

**The accident happened as the man, a market gardener, was driving at Narrowmoor Cross (check spelling with Brian) near Kingsbridge, on Tuesday at 1.15pm.**

*Kingsbridge Gazette*

## TURKEY LATEST

# Literary Review

## Half a Mo

**Renegade, or Halo2**
Timothy Mo
*(Paddleless, £17.99)*

AT A TIME when publishing standards are declining as never before, when respectable firms are shedding their mid-list authors in favour of overhyped hacks and shedding their editors and proof-readers in favour of accountants, it is perhaps not surprising that a growing number of established, critically lauded authors should have decided that if they want the job done properly they'd better do it themselves. With modern technology, nothing could be simpler. And you can probably make a better go of the publicity than the nice-but-vague puffettes at your old firm.

But was it really declining editorial standards that persuaded Timothy Mo to go it alone, or was it declining authorial standards that forced him to do so? Mo had to self-publish his last novel, Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard, because no respectable firm would touch it. Not surprisingly since it was, literally, a piece of shit. Actually, once you got beyond the prologue, or coprologue, with its detailed description of a German sex-tourist's ecstatic pleasure at being shat upon by a Filipina prostitute, it got better, though still marred by a tendency to dress up as a novel what was in effect an extended J'Accuse against the Marcos regime in the Philippines. (They shat on their people, geddit? Not such an impenetrable metaphor. But Mo doesn't half like to spell things out.)

Unfortunately, the new novel suffers from the same faults — only more so and at considerably greater length. A grand tour d'horizon of corruption, injustice and racial exploitation, with once again that "dipshit country" (p. 385) the Philippines getting the starring role.

The narrator-hero, "Sugar" Rey Archimedes Blondel Castro, is the son of a black US serviceman and a Filipina bar-girl. But before we have even been told his name, he is boasting of his superior penis size. "The calibre of the puny Asian pee-shooter was of no consequence beside the reports of my mighty elephant-gun which had been bruited far and wide." Note how Mo, who is half-English, half-Chinese, is not afraid to plump straight for the racial stereotype. Ah, but, you see, black narrator speaking, so okay.

Thanks to an anonymous benefactor, Rey is rescued from his shanty origins, educated by Jesuits and sent to law school in Manila. He joins a student fraternity whose members are more interested in perpetrating crimes such as drug-dealing, gun-running, gang-rape and murder, than merely reading about them in books. As a result, Rey and chums must flee the country. They stow away on a Russian freighter and, when discovered by the crew half way across the South China Sea, are serially gang-raped and thrown overboard. Rey alone survives to tell the tale. He washes up on a beach in Hong Kong and gets employment as a driver for some British expats imaginatively named the Smiths. Sojourns in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the fictitious Gulf state of Bohaiden ensue.

Everywhere he goes, Rey observes for our benefit, and with graphic examples, how Filipinos and other members of "the international underclass who were the slaves of our century" are abused and oppressed. Curiously, for once, (this is post-colonial fiction par excellence, after all) the British are not entirely to blame. Not even when, escaping his new Arab employers on a trip to London, he becomes an illegal immigrant and witnesses various forms of inter-racial violence in the East End. As a black Filipino he has a double disadvantage, of course, though the element of surprise sometimes works in his favour, as does his mantra about being the son of a US serviceman. However, he keeps quiet about this when he jumps ship, after a further stint on the ocean wave (more gang-rape by jolly tars) in Cuba, where the natives are friendly but the dipshit country itself is curiously reminiscent of home.

Somewhere in this 500-page ramble there is a splendid 200-page adventure yarn signalling wildly to be let out. There are episodes here worthy of Stevenson or Kipling (just two of Mo's literary forebears whose names are clumsily dropped in the text, along with unsubtle mentions of Gulliver's Travels and The Odyssey) but unfortunately such scenes usually degenerate into the designer-sadism of Breast Eaten Ellis. And since Mo has done lots of research, much of the book is padded out with what are really travelogues, filled with been-there place names and done-that descriptions and I-know-what-they're-saying italicised quotations.

It is here that the editorial blue pencil might have been wielded to good effect — as might the services of a fact-checker. For example, Mo repeatedly alludes to the fact that Rey's Jesuit teacher, Fr Paul, is from Ampleforth, while overlooking the fact that the Yorkshire public school is run by Benedictine monks, not Jesuits.

Although some of these faults are the hazards of self-publication, there is no reason to believe that a mainstream publisher would have made a better job of the book, given the state of things now. What is disappointing is that Mo was once a very promising writer. He has just got too big for his books.

## Hugh advance

**Alex Ferguson: Managing My Life**
Alex Ferguson with Hugh McIlvanney
(Hodder & Stoughton £18.99)

FOOTBALL may have been Britain's national game and popular obsession for more than a century, but the writing it has inspired has been woefully thin, a pallid canon of statistic-laden club histories or ghosted autobiographies. The persistent lack of quality writing about the game itself stands as an indictment of the corps of journalists paid to cover it full-time.

In this rather shameful corner of journalism, an inbuilt tendency to glorify the game combines with perennial worries about access — to matches, clubs, managers and players — to produce a press pack which works to the principle of not biting the hand which feeds it. Investigative work, over the years and now in the corporate age, has principally been done by journalists from outside full-time football ranks, for whom keeping in with people in the game, and being able to turn a phrase, are the key professional skills. And in the kingdom of the football hack, Hugh McIlvanney is king.

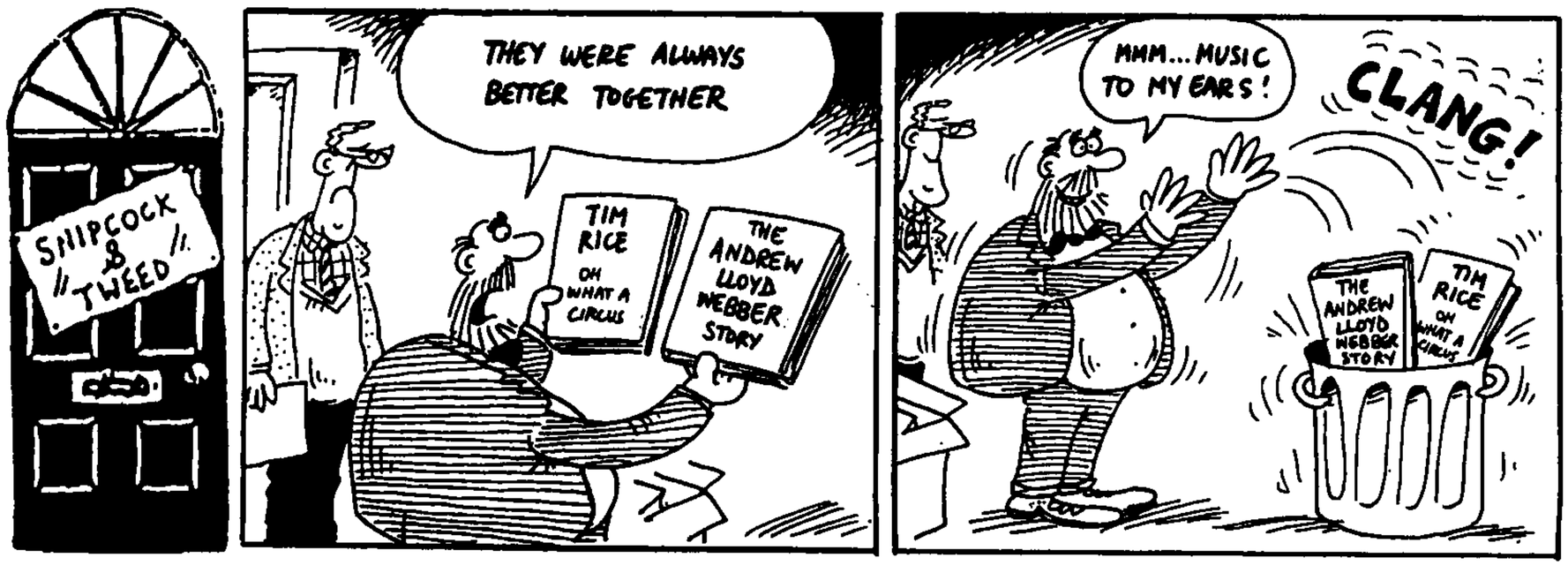
When this book, McIlvanney's ghosted autobiography of Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, was published, fellow hacks lined up to praise it, and him as a great football writer. And Managing My Life is indeed a monument of sorts to the football journalist's art, McIlvanney earning himself some share of Ferguson's reported £500,000 advance by being close enough to his subject to produce a wretched, simplistic, one-dimensional, tedious, relentlessly self-serving account of Ferguson's life and career.

McIlvanney sets out his approach to objectivity in his own introduction to the book, in which he describes Ferguson as "an unmitigated marvel". "If Alex Ferguson had never done anything extraordinary in football," he goes on, "it would still be one of the major privileges of my life to know him."

The resulting 450-page tome is entirely within the tradition of football autobiography, reducing Ferguson's near six decades of life to a dismal chronology of football matches and cast of cardboard characters, and containing writing which would make a 12-year-old's toes curl. "No matter what kind of journey we make of life, where we started out will always be part of us," the book begins. And it doesn't get any better.

In football profiles over the years, Ferguson has generally achieved three dimensionality through accounts of his working class roots in the Scottish shipyards, and reputed lifelong socialism. Yet while the book's jacket describes him as "a deeply committed socialist", there is barely a mention of such political conviction in the book. The book sheds no light on Ferguson's motivations as a shop steward for apprentice toolmakers in his youth, and nowhere does the book threaten to wonder how Ferguson views his socialism now, as a racehorse-owning Cheshire-based millionaire, earning a reputed £1.5m a year at Manchester United plc.

Between the lines of mind-numbing detail and mawkish aphorism, Ferguson emerges as an interesting subject. Brought up in a poor, desperately hard environment, he climbed to the top via a difficult playing career and management which started in Scotland's poverty-stricken lower divisions. His painstaking progress from there to treble-winning with United, his constant aggression, obvious financial ambition, obsessive drive to win, even at 57, is good material for any inquiring writer. A true life of Ferguson would illuminate his complexities, be an insight not only into Manchester United, but into football itself, transformed in Ferguson's time from locally-supported pastime to global television experience. But such an account can hardly be expected of Britain's football writers, for whom McIlvanney, ghost writer of this feeble work, is leader of the pack.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
THEY WERE ALWAYS BETTER TOGETHER
TIM RICE OH WHAT A CIRCUS
THE ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER STORY
MMM... MUSIC TO MY EARS!
CLANG!
THE ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER STORY
TIM RICE OH WHAT A CIRCUS

**MEANWHILE, DOWN AT THE GLASGOW GROUCHO CLUB**

*Darling, I'm getting a new agent... Stabbed my last one to death!*

*Me too... Mine wasn't getting me any auditions, so I slit him from ear to ear!*

# BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ PITY poor Amy Jenkins. The creator of *This Life* may have extracted a £600,000 two-book deal from Hodder & Stoughton at last year's Frankfurt, but that kind of money doesn't go very far these days. In a recent *Times* profile, written in a suitably sympathetic style by Nick Danziger, a self-confessed "old friend", she complains that if "it took me six years to do two books, and if there was no ancillary money coming in... it would only be £100,000 a year". Evidently, money would be hellishly tight had Jenkins not inherited a large house in Chelsea from her grandmother, thus relieving her of mortgage worries.

Still, she's worth it. Isn't she? At the time the deal was signed, her agent Sarah Lutyens – influenced, no doubt, by a desire to justify her own 10 percent of the exorbitant sum – told the trade press that publishers "just see *Honeymoon* (the first of the two books) for what it is, a very exciting and gloriously romantic first novel". Hodder MD Martin Neild – who beat Heinemann in the race to sign Jenkins – backed up Lutyens' enthusiasm by describing the book as "a glorious romantic novel with huge potential".

It is somewhat curious, however, that both talked of *Honeymoon* in the present tense, as if the manuscript had been delivered and the presses were ready to roll. In fact, at the time, all that existed of the book was a 2000-word section and a plot synopsis. Despite the fact that the book is due for publication in January, Jenkins admits cheerfully to her old chum in the *Times* that she's still "not far enough" into the manuscript.

■ CAROLINE COON's libel case against Random House and Jonathon Green (see *Eyes* passim) rumbles on, albeit with some interesting twists and turns. One of these concerns a strange lapse of judgement in April by Coon's then-lawyer Mark Stephens of Stephens Innocent, during an edition of the Radio 4 programme *Points of Law*.

Stephens, seemingly apropos of nothing, referred on-air to Green as "an appalling author" and attacked *All Dressed Up*, the book at the centre of the row, in similar terms. Not surprisingly, Green wrote to Stephens, asking him to justify his statements and his unprofessional behaviour. He added that "as a professional writer and journalist, and one who is continuing to suffer from what I see as the quasi-censorship of the libel laws, I would not be so hypocritical as to invoke them in my aid".

Despite the fact that Coon has, perhaps wisely, ditched the publicity-hungry Stephens in favour of representing herself in court, it seems likely that an already complex legal situation will have been complicated further by this odd episode.

■ WHEN it comes to tying up markets, there are few businessmen better at it than the Dirty Digger. So the dual serialisation in Murdoch's newspapers the *Times* and the *Sun* of his publishing company Harper Collins's hardback edition of the autobiography of Sir Alex Ferguson, manager of oh-so-nearly-his football team Man United, seemed like a masterstroke.

Less pleased, however, were *Times* readers who decided to take advantage of the paper's special offer and buy a copy of the book for £16.99 (a knock-down from the publisher's price of £18.99)... only to find bookshops offering copies for £12.99 when it actually came out.

■ AN INTRIGUING document is doing the rounds of London booksellers, courtesy of solicitors Harkavys. "We act for a client who has been adjudicated bankrupt", it begins. "Our client is a writer, and he currently retains an extensive library, which he considers to be part of the tools of his trade. His Trustee in Bankruptcy would like to say that this is not the case, and wishes to sell the entire collection." All is not gloom, however — it seems the client may expect more lucrative times to come, for, as the letter continues: "We are trying to establish where we could obtain replacement books and find out how much they would cost."

The identity of the unfortunate bankrupt is not revealed, although there are a few clues to be gleaned from the list of 568 volumes attached to it. Who, for instance, would want such an extensive collection of books by or about Lord Beaverbrook? A member of his family perhaps, or someone that had him as a mentor in his early career? What about the extensive collection of works on Nixon — could this person perhaps have undertaken research on the shamed politician, and even written a work himself?

Also in the library are biographies of almost every Conservative party leader this century, as well as Tom Bower's very critical study of Mohamed Fayed. Not to mention such gems as several editions of Gibbon's *Decline And Fall*, Randolph Churchill's *What I Said About the Press*, and *The Liar*, filed somewhat incongruously beside the *Book of Common Prayer*. That volume is only one of an extensive collection of theological works, many of which seem to have been recently acquired — titles include *Born Again*, *The Quest for God*, *The Line Between Right and Wrong*, and *Sermons in Solitary Confinement*.

But surely the gem of the unlucky bibliophile's collection is lot 567 — standing on the outsize shelf alongside *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, a "Large Family Bible, inscribed with various Aitken names, births, and marriages".

*"It's prurient, but it far outsells the original"*

■ ALAN WATKINS, veteran political columnist of the *Independent on Sunday*, is near completion of a volume of memoirs about his exciting life in Fleet Street. When he started the book last year he had in mind the nifty title *From Beaverbrook to Boycott*. Alas, a year is a long time at the *Sindie*, and the title has seen two changes of editor since he first put pen to paper. *From Beaverbrook to Street-Porter* just hasn't got the same ring to it.

# Pseuds Corner

**Where do you live?**

I have a home just outside London. What was important to me was to be close to Heathrow and Gatwick. I don't consider that I live in London as such. Most of my city life takes place in Paris and Milan. I feel like a perfume bottle sometimes. London-Paris-Milan.

**MICK HUCKNALL**
**Metro**

Mr [Antony] Gormley said: "You could think of a coat peg as an isolated incident in a wall, but it also helps to isolate objects. When it has something hanging on it, it sort of sits on a wall like a piece of art. But I think it should hold its own among other coat pegs, or else it is no good."

**Financial Times**

It's a fair enough idea as a concept – fish 'n' chips. You know you need the chips to ease the come-down from the fish, whose high is in turn re-supported by the chip. You cannot recapture this moment with the single fish. The fish will not be caught twice. The fish rules supreme, swimming free again in the rapids in your mouth, flying like it did once through the air to its place of birth – or is that just salmon? Do no other fish leap upstream? And can you imagine ordering a single futon, while holding two single fishes and winking at the salesman?

**PHIL KAY**
**sundayherald**

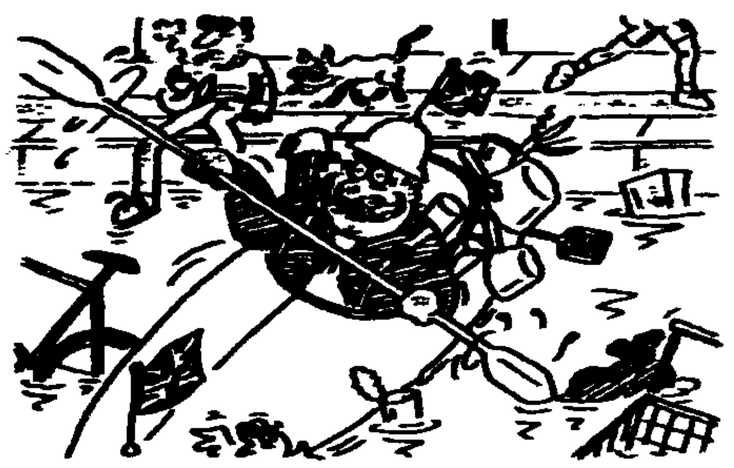
It was for her a day when the spear-carrier played Hamlet and made an absolute wow of it, a day when Prufrock dared to eat a peach, a day when the humble parish priest became Pope, a day when the tail-ender picked up his bat and won the match.

**SIMON BARNES**
**The Times**

*Travelling in India recently I was approached several times (sometimes in the holiest of temples) by Indians, who would whisper to me, with emphatic importance, one single word only – the word "Diana". In this way, the speaker was seeking a significant, not unkind, communication with me.*

Temple of Diana *makes reference to a real person and the deeply sad, abject events of her life which, without disrespect, have become a common property as symbolic of collective intellect and passions. For the purpose of this show, works are described as being within the extremely unfashionable, forgotten category of art called history painting, (this description obviously qualified by the fact that many of the works are other than painting).*

**Neal Brown's Note on *Temple of Diana* Exhibition at The Blue Gallery**



**For the whole of June and July, I travelled alone by canoe and on foot to try and discover Middle England.**

**DAVID AARONOVITCH**
**Independent**

CONTRIBUTORS: Darren Goddard, C. Garden, Damien Bennett, Jono Waters, David Taylor, Michael Carlson.

**£10 paid for entries**

# IN THE BACK

IRA SHOOTING

## How the peace process works

**NORTHUMBRIA's Knacker is being forced to answer some difficult questions over a near-fatal delay in getting ambulance and police aid to the former RUC double agent Martin McGartland, gunned down by the IRA outside his Tyneside home two months ago (*Eye* 980).**

For more than 20 minutes, neighbour Peter Connon – who heard the shots and dialled 999 – made increasingly desperate pleas for help to the emergency services, as his family used socks, tee-shirts and cling-film to plug McGartland's wounds.

At one stage – he thinks after about 10 minutes – he heard the ambulance siren approaching. But relief was short-lived, for it stopped a short distance away. When he demanded to know "what the **** is happening", he was told there were "certain protocols" to follow. Police had to ensure the gunman had fled and the area was safe before allowing in the ambulance. Forty-four year old Mr Connon told the *Eye*: "I told them the only people in the area were my wife and children, trying to save Martin's life. We were frantic. When we rolled Martin over, blood was coming out of his side like milk from a bottle. I think it's only because my son had done a first aid course and knew what to do, that he is still alive – he would have bled to death."

McGartland suspects that would have suited his former government employers very well. They have been trying to wash their hands of responsibility for the agent-turned-author ever since a spectacular police and CPS double act blew his cover two years ago.

He had been living under a false identity in Tyneside, where he had fled in 1992 after his IRA comrades discovered he was a plant. But then a decision was taken to prosecute him for perverting the course of justice by using different driving licences. After hearing of his dangerous double life, the Newcastle Crown Court jury took less than 10 minutes to find McGartland 'not guilty' – but by then everyone including the IRA knew who he was.

Ever since his lawyers have been negotiating a new safe identity for Mr McGartland – and even now, as he lives at a secret address and with 24-hour armed protection, those negotiations continue.

Yesterday a police spokesman said it was standard police practice to ensure an area was safe before allowing in another emergency service: "The safety of the public is of paramount concern."

"I would like to know who was making a decision about me and my family's safety," said Mr Connon. "There were no gunmen around – not even armed police."

Even though Northumbria has recently issued descriptions of two men with Irish accents whom it wishes to trace, Knacker seems determined not to call a spade, er, the IRA. "We are keeping an open mind about who was behind the shooting," said a spokesman.

DEATHS IN CUSTODY

## Same old story

**THE *Eye* has learned why the Police Complaints Authority has ignored its own advice for investigating deaths in custody in its handling of the case of Sarah Thomas. Sarah, a black architectural student, died after collapsing in a London police station earlier this month (see *Eye* 983).**

The PCA has decided not to call in an outside force to investigate – as is usual – because it seems to have prejudged the issue. It has already decided that hers was only "technically" a death in custody and that, anyway, the police officers involved appear to have acted impeccably.

"We would be more inclined to opt for an external investigating officer when deaths appear to have resulted from police use of force or where there are suggestions of some contributory negligence by officers," said authority member Anthony Williams.

He was writing to lawyers acting on behalf of Sarah's boyfriend, Paul Doyle, who wants to know why his healthy 34-year-old girlfriend died after being arrested while waiting for him outside their North London flat and is concerned that an outside investigating officer has not been called in.

In the letter, Mr Williams seems to have already prejudged the case after hearing that the Met had been monitoring Sarah's condition in hospital before she died and found "very high levels" of cocaine. This is being contested by Mr Doyle, who is having his own post-mortem carried out.

He will no doubt have in mind the case of Shiji Lapite, who died in police custody in 1995. The police put out similar information about high levels of drugs in Mr Lapite's body. But he was later found to have suffered 45 injuries – the fatal one consistent with the use of a neck-hold of such force it crushed his voice box. Despite an inquest jury verdict that he had been unlawfully killed, and despite a judicial review ordering them to reconsider their decision not to bring disciplinary charges against officers, the PCA has stuck by its initial decision. Then, again, it relied on the Met to investigate itself.

The PCA handling of that case, as well as others, including Richard O'Brien (*Eye* 982) was condemned only last month by Judge Gerald Butler in his inquiry into deaths in custody. It seems the PCA is unwilling to learn from its mistakes.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

## So long, social workers

**THE GOVERNMENT is pressing ahead with its death by a thousand cuts of the traditional social worker. Detailed plans for Jack Straw's new Youth Justice Board to take over responsibility for commissioning and buying secure places for child and teenage offenders have been slipped out, largely unnoticed, in a Commons written answer.**

They follow hard on the heels of an announcement that the Government is to set up a new children and family court advisory service to take over social workers' responsibility for the fate of children caught up in divorce, adoption and safety disputes. And that came only days after it was announced that ministers' favourite teacher-basher, Chris Woodhead, was to take over local authority responsibility for inspecting children's nurseries, playgroups and child-minders.

The aim of the latest emasculation of the local authority social worker is, apparently, to try and achieve an improvement in conditions under which young people are held, and to ensure that suitable accommodation is available throughout the country. Most children are currently held hundreds of miles from their homes.

However fears are that when the government starts demanding a tight reign on the board's budget, more young people will end up in unsuitable adult jails. It currently costs about £500 a week to keep a child courtesy of Her Majesty's Prison Service – or Group 4 – compared to around £1,500 to £2,500 for the more suitable local authority secure homes, which are well staffed with psychiatrists, counsellors and teachers.

Said Harry Fletcher, of the probation officers union: "It seems that the Home Office has won the ideological battle of punishment rather than welfare when it come to dealing with juveniles. The real fear is that hundreds will end up in young offender institutions because they are cheaper, despite the risks of suicide, abuse and bullying."

MARCHIONESS INQUIRY

## The cover-up continues

**SENIOR officials at the Department of Transport (DoT) were horrified by the surprise announcement on 18 August by deputy prime minister John Prescott that there will be a judicial inquiry into the 1989 *Marchioness* disaster.**

The decision was in striking contrast to the department's 10-year campaign to obstruct the demands of the families of the 51 people who died when the Thames pleasure craft collided with the dredger *Bowbelle* 10 years ago last month. The DoT's instinctive reaction to the tragedy – cover-up and evasion – was accepted by the Secretary of State for Transport at the time, Cecil Parkinson, and his successors, including Glenda Jackson, Transport Minister until this summer's mini-shuffle. Several times since 1997 Jackson replied to the pleas of the families for an inquiry in the bromide terms of her predecessors. It was only after Glenda was dropped that the *Marchioness* file was re-opened by Prescott. He agreed to meet the bereaved families without any lawyers or DoT civil servants present. The result of the meeting was his decision to set up a judicial inquiry under a senior judge, Sir Anthony Clarke.

The families were delighted, and jubilantly crowded round Prescott for a prolonged photo-call. Prescott duly attended the memorial service for the 51 dead at Southwark Cathedral, and it looked for all the world as if the deputy PM had cajoled DoT into a complete U-turn, and that the *Marchioness* scandal would at last be laid bare to the public.

But wait. The small print of the official announcement tells a rather different story. The Clarke inquiry will investigate "safety on the river Thames" in general. Only when he has completed that part of the inquiry will Lord Justice Clarke decide whether or not there is a case for further public investigation of the *Marchioness* disaster.

The first part of the inquiry is expected to be completed quickly, with the judge's recommendations about safety on the Thames incorporated into new regulations in time for millennium year, which is expected to see a surge in traffic on the Thames. Although the bereaved families will be allowed to attend the hearings, and to ask questions, there is no guarantee that the full horror of what happened in August 1989 will be subjected to full-scale public inquiry.

This news has caused great rejoicing in the offices of RMC (formerly Ready Mixed Concrete), whose subsidiary South Coast Shipping owned the *Bowbelle*. *Eye* readers will be very familiar with the charge that the Tories stubbornly resisted a public inquiry into the *Marchioness* disaster because of the strong links between RMC, the Thatcher family and the Tory Party.

On the day after Prescott's announcement the *Express* "revealed" that at the time of sinking, RMC had given £152,000 to the Tory Party; that its director Sir Neil Macfarlane is a golfing friend of Denis Thatcher and a former Tory minister of sport, and that in 1990, when the controversy over the *Marchioness* inquiry was "still rumbling" the RMC chairman, the late John Camden, agreed to pay refurbishing and running costs of an office for Denis. In fact, most of these "new" facts had already appeared in the *Eye* and elsewhere.

Other "revelations" about the *Bowbelle* in the *Express* were taken from an official report into the disaster by the secretary of the Law Society, John Hayes, in 1992, which was almost ignored at the time. These included the uncomfortable fact that the *Bowbelle* had smashed into 11 other craft on the Thames, including a pleasure boat; that as a result she had been banned from the upper reaches of the Thames; that much of the crew on the fatal night were drunk; and that the lookout was partially blind and anyway not in eye contact or earshot of the bridge. And the grisly fact that the hands of the dead had been amputated by order of the Westminster coroner Paul Knapman was revealed in the *Eye* in January 1993.

The *Marchioness* sinking was a horrific example of innocent lives being sacrificed in the reckless pursuit of corporate profit. The story profoundly shocked the jury at the inquest in March 1995. The coroner, John Burton, explained as carefully as he could that it was not really possible to return a verdict of unlawful killing since this would appear to clash with the acquittal of the captain of the *Bowbelle* on a minor charge of contradicting his duty. The jury listened carefully to the coroner's direction and promptly brought in a verdict of, er, unlawful killing.

For the remainder of their term of office the Tory government did nothing to bring the unlawful killers to book. Sadly, by concentrating the new inquiry on future river safety, and by postponing any decision about responsibility for what happened, it looks as though Labour, faced with a conflict between a big Tory company and many families who have lost their loved ones, take up their stand resolutely on the side of the company.

ORGANOPHOSPHATES

# Who's Sarin now

**RECENT reports on the death of airman Ronald Maddison from nerve gas poisoning at Porton Down in 1953 implied that he had died because he had received an unusually large dose of Sarin. In fact the crucial fatal element in the experiment in which Maddison, 20, took part, was that the drop of Sarin placed on his forearm was covered by a non-porous dressing, which ensured that most of the nerve agent penetrated his skin, rather than evaporating.**

This is alarmingly relevant to the sorry history of farmers who were obliged, in law, to use organophosphate compounds to dip sheep from 1976 until 1992. Nerve agents also belong to the family of OPs, although they are of course far more toxic and specifically designed to kill humans quickly. But the basic mechanism of all OPs is the same — they attack and disable the central nervous system.

In 1991 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) sent out a leaflet to all sheep farmers and dippers, giving advice on the protective clothing to be worn while dipping with OPs: rubber gloves, boots, aprons and faceshields. Later the same year a Porton-trained scientist, Dr Tim Marrs, who was acting as adviser to the Department of Health on OPs, told a group of sheep farmers that the solvents in sheep dip would rot rubber —therefore the OP would penetrate the gloves, would be held against the skin of the hands and thence absorbed into the bloodstream. This would have the same effect as putting a non-porous dressing over the drop of nerve gas on Maddison's skin, but in reverse.

In 1994 the HSE advice changed — it said dippers should wear "synthetic rubber nitrile gloves, at least 0.5mm thick and 300mm long". It also, for the first time, recommended that gas masks should be worn for certain tasks, such as "working with recently dipped sheep in still air conditions". It specified that the masks should be "capable of removing particulates and gas / vapour".

Porton experiments have had some disastrous consequences over the years — but at least it was always acknowledged as a chemical and biological weapons research establishment. Nearly 50 years after the death of Maddison our farms appear to have become offshoots of Porton, with shepherds required to wear clothing appropriate for chemical warfare.

CONSPIRACY

# Grit in the Oyston

**BILL HARRISON, millionaire friend of Margaret Thatcher, who died of a heart attack last month, has earned a footnote in English history. In the glorious 200 year history of income tax in Britain, this Lancashire property developer appears to have been the only politician to break the Official Secrets Acts by buying the Inland Revenue records of his opponents.**

Sloppy work by the Crown Prosecution Service allowed the deputy Labour leader of Preston in the eighties, Frank McGrath, to discover that his political opponents had passed to police a detailed profile of his affairs based on secret internal Inland Revenue documents.

Last year, McGrath got legal aid to bring proceedings against Bill Harrison, two former Tory ministers, Lord Blaker and Robert Atkins, two chief constables and a private detective. In the week that Harrison died, McGrath's solicitors served proceedings on the former Preston chip shop owner Michael Murrin [see *Eyes passim*] who tape recorded Harrison complaining about paying private detectives more than £20,000 for an investigation into McGrath and Harold Parker, the Labour leaders of Preston, both friends of the "socialist millionaire" Owen Oyston.

Murrin said his 20-year campaign against Oyston was also partly funded by Bill Harrison.

Murrin taped hundreds of hours of telephone consultations with Harrison and Lord Blaker and lodged his documents in a bank in the Cayman Islands. News that Euro Bank Corporation of the Caymans is now in the hands of government controllers, after a US Federal Trade Commission complaint about laundering internet fraud money, sent the former owner of the village chip shop at Longridge, Lancs, scurrying to the Caymans on 18 August, to retrieve his Oyston documents.

Harrison told the *Sunday Times* that after his daughter's car had killed two women pedestrians in Kirkham he telephoned Len Broughton "and asked him if he could tell me the name of the police chief that I should contact in order to have certain aspects of the case investigated rather deeper". This telephone call was cited in a report which led to the resignation of the Chief Constable of Lancashire. Years later, Harrison said: "It is very possible that Owen Oyston as a principal advertiser with the *Lancashire Evening Post* had considerable influence on the paper's coverage of my daughter's case."

During Tory conferences at Blackpool, Thatch used to land by helicopter on Harrison's lawn and stay at his home. Murrin says Harrison told him he had discussed Oyston with Thatch and on 16 August 1985, Murrin taped Harrison saying: "It's all to do with Oyston, he's behind everything and once you destroy the myth... you see we both agreed that everybody thinks he's so powerful and wealthy... beyond reproach."

Disillusioned with his stated aim of getting Oyston in jail, Harrison told Murrin in another taped phone call: "I feel as though... I've taken a suitcase with 20-odd thousand in it and thrown it off the bloody North Pier."

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

# The quality of mercenary

**THE REPLACEMENT of ethnic cleansing of Kosovan Albanians by ethnic cleansing of Kosovan Serbs following the end of Nato's war in the Balkans seems to have taken many western commentators by surprise.**

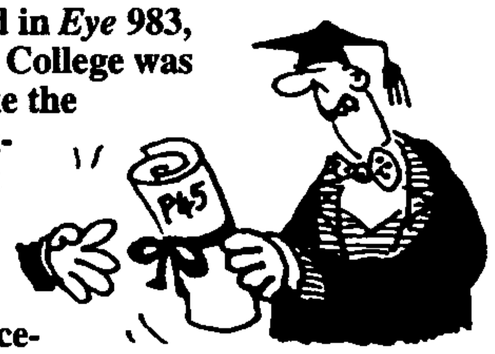
In fact, Kosovo has merely seen the re-emergence of several usual suspects from the earlier conflict in the region. In 1995 Croatian forces drove some 170,000 Serbs from their homes in the Krajina region, with attendant murder and arson. Richard Holbrooke, the chief US negotiator in Bosnia, was briefed by his deputy Bob Frasure: "We 'hired' these people to be our 'junkyard dogs', because we were desperate. This is no time to get squeamish."

But the Croats were not the only dogs in the junkyard — the US mercenary company MPRI (Military Professional Resources International), headed by ex-US Chief of Staff General Carl Vuono, won the contract to train the Croatian army in 1995. Within months "Operation Storm" in Krajina was launched. More recently, MPRI were reported to have been hired to train the KLA. The Croatian brigadier general who masterminded Operation Storm, Agim Ceku, retired to become the KLA's chief of staff at the same time, earning praise from "a retired US army officer now with the Virginia-based MPRI" in the pages of *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

The magazine went on to list Ceku's impressive CV, which includes "masterminding the Medak offensive in 1993". Also known as the "Medak Massacre", this culminated in a shoot-out between Croat forces and Canadian peacekeepers who attempted to stop them terrorising Serb civilians.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

# Disaster-upon-Avon




**As reported in *Eye* 983, Stratford College was forced to make the "very substantial" payment after principal Nigel Briggs sacked two vice-principals, both of whom were disabled. John Holland, who had just registered as blind and Dermot Shiels, who was recovering from cancer, were each handed a cardboard box and a bin liner and given three minutes to clear their desks.**

The men have always argued that their sackings were unlawful, because they were not allowed to apply for the two remaining vice-principal posts. They also believe documents were tampered with during their appeal to the governors.

Briggs and the chair of governors, Vince Seaman, have now issued a bizarre joint statement saying that the redundancies and the subsequent payments were part of a cost-cutting exercise.

Education Secretary David Blunkett and the Further Education Funding Council have been asked to investigate the sackings. They might like to know that the college isn't the only Stratford institution to which Seaman has applied his fine business mind (so much better than all those teachers and lecturers).

For Mr Seaman, a Stratford town councillor, is current chair of the Guild and College Estate charity, which has been under investigation by the Charity Commission since last February. The charity, which is responsible for £28.5m worth of Stratford council property, stands accused of two decades of mismanagement, although Seaman wasn't involved throughout this period. Such is the commission's confidence in his commercial abilities that it is threatening to end all council influence over the charity, remove all 16 councillors as trustees and take over the charity itself.

**● TERRY and Nina Ashurst, the husband and wife team who run Doncaster College as their own personal fiefdom, were the original inspiration for the High Principals column after they sacked union activist John Giddins for refusing to sign a contract that would have made him work longer hours for less money. Giddins and others who wished to appeal when principal Terry Ashurst made them redundant were told to write to the head of personnel and clerk to the governors, both of which posts were held by... Nina Ashurst.**

The Ashursts came to symbolise the nepotistic world of further education, but have been somewhat cowed since an industrial tribunal found in favour of Giddins. The Ashursts were forced to admit that correct recruitment procedures had not entirely been followed when Ashurst appointed his wife as one of his senior executives.

Now a £1m conference centre has been opened at Doncaster College. It is run by Waterdale Training Enterprises, of which Terry Ashurst is a director. Clients are told that cheques have to be paid to the company rather than to the college itself. The Further Education Funding Council, which belatedly decided to oversee companies run by colleges, will no doubt be satisfied that the operations of Waterdale comply with all their requirements, especially as activities at the centre are in part subsidised by the cheap labour of catering students.

Meanwhile lecturers are wondering what could be the educational justification of the cost of the centre or, indeed, the £1.3m surplus being run by the college when lecturing staff have been cut by 10 per cent.

# In the City

HOW IS IT possible to lose £20m of other people's money without their noticing? That is the question posed by the activities of Hugh Eaves, whom it emerged earlier this year had lost the millions entrusted to him by his former partners in leading stockbrokers Phillips & Drew. The answer in part appears to be by not paying enough attention.

Ever since Eaves put his hands up in May and admitted he had lost the money, blaming unsuccessful trading in high risk financial derivatives, investigations have been underway to unearth what happened. These have raised serious reservations about how Eaves invested the £20m which represented the retirement nest egg for his former partners. But they have also revealed the highly unusual informal arrangements under which the former P&D finance director managed these funds which enabled them to be lost before any of his ex-partners realised they were going, never mind had gone.

The funds entrusted to Eaves flowed from the 1985 takeover of P&D by Union Bank of Switzerland. This made Eaves and his 30 fellow partners millionaires in one of the earliest of the "Big Bang" deals which marked the end of the old Stock Exchange. Partners could take cash or UBS shares and loan notes or a mixture of all three. Those taking shares or notes were able to defer a large capital gains tax bite of up to 40 percent. So not surprisingly many opted for UBS "paper" which was then left to Eaves to manage.

Some 15 P&D executives decided to hand over their pay-offs to Eaves to manage for their retirement. But incredibly for supposedly smart City suits, many if not all of them would appear to have entered into no formal investment management agreement with their former finance director. But then it also seems he agreed to undertake his role without any fee!

Seemingly far too busy to manage their own money they left it to their old friend to run as he wished in his own unpaid time. No doubt they were reassured by the fact that his share of the P&D pay-off was also involved.

For 14 years the arrangement appeared to work like a Swiss watch. Those partners who wanted to cash in all or part of their stake in the fund were paid out, no problem. Those who sat back and collected dividends and interest were also paid what was due. But in another highly unusual feature of the deal with Eaves, most of his ex-partners do not appear to have required or been sent regular statements indicating what was happening to their investments! Ignorance was bliss so long as the cheques kept rolling in.

Meanwhile former backroom boy Eaves was indulging his ambitions by becoming a local hero in Bury, backing the local football team with up to £6m. It repaid his generosity by rising from the Third to the First Division. He was also into property in a big way. Eaves was also attentive to the needs of his disabled wife.

Just how this spending was financed is now the subject of intense investigation by UBS and his former partners. Their suspicion is that it may not have entirely come from Eaves's own resources. The lack of statements also makes it difficult to track exactly who was losing what and how. However, what has emerged about certain aspects of his trading has raised concerns.

Throughout the period from 1985 the P&D partners were reassured by the steady rise in the UBS share price which increased the value of their investment. UBS shares rose from around 100 Swiss Francs to almost SF600 by 1998. This would seem to have also assisted Eaves to cover any shortfalls caused by trading losses or perhaps his own investments and spending. But once this rise ended last year problems began. The UBS share price collapsed to around SF250. It is now back to SF430.

It appears that on occasion UBS shares were bought back to provide the required income or capital after being sold to provide cash to those requesting it. Eventually Eaves appears to have been caught out by the inability to repay outstanding loan notes from the reserves reduced by trading losses and possibly his own investments.

Eaves has offered his shares in Bury plus several properties to his former colleagues to help reduce their losses. Whether his mishandling of the P&D partners' £20m will become a criminal investigation remains to be seen. However, the understandable embarrassment of his former colleagues/victims may get in the way.

More likely is the threat of a civil claim against UBS. The funds Eaves managed were in UBS accounts. But the Swiss bankers are unlikely to be prepared to pay up the full £20m claiming that there was more than a little contributory negligence on the part of the City sophisticates who trusted Eaves with their money.

AFTER 25 years in business I still don't know the difference between gross and net," Virgin founder Richard Branson disarmingly admitted recently. This will come as no surprise to those who study the accounts of companies in the ever expanding Virgin empire where losses are far more frequent than profits – yet the new ventures keep on coming. Electricity, gas and telephones are the latest to emanate from the hyper-active Virgin hype machine.

Meanwhile back in the distant past – Virgin companies rarely produce their figures with alacrity – Virgin Hotels Group has recently checked in with its results to October 1997! These revealed losses almost halved at £2.1m on increased turnover of £18m, taking accumulated after tax losses to £8m from the British and Spanish operations.

Needless to say the bearded wonder is optimistic about the future. But then he always is.

THOSE who do business with Tory benefactor Michael Ashcroft and come back for a second helping are rare indeed. So it is not altogether surprising that already complaints are being heard from those with experience of his new Carlisle venture. First his old pal Tony Berry complained about the buy-out terms for his Recruit staff agency. Now it seems executives in another Carlisle employment agency purchase last year, Abacus, are complaining. They claim to have been deprived so far of promised Carlisle share options designed to replace the existing Abacus option scheme. No doubt merely a misunderstanding which Ashcroft and Carlisle will be only too happy to correct.

Meanwhile let no one say that the bespectacled self-styled buccaneer lacks a sense of humour. Not only is he the "big banana" in the Tory Party as well as his Central American fiefdom of Belize, but he owns a company called Banana. Its role would appear to be to make low cost loans to Carlisle – $14m to date.

*"Miss Trubshaw, think of something amusing for me to write in your leaving card"*

JUDGES, like the rich, are different. Normal rules do not apply to those who spend their time enforcing those same rules on others. Witness Judge Victor Hall, recently banned for drink driving but still sitting in judgement.

The most manifest evidence of that truth was provided last year when Judge Richard Gee was saved from a re-trial for mortgage fraud by the intervention of Attorney-General John Morris on the spurious grounds that it would be too stressful! The prisons are full of those who wish the same excuse had worked for them.

Morris, whose already small reputation was justifiably diminished by a decision that outraged not only the public but also lawyers and detectives involved in the case, has now returned to justified backbench obscurity. So he will be unable to intervene in an ongoing bid to bring Gee to justice. This time for Legal Aid fraud.

Scotland Yard has been asked by the Lord Chancellor's office to re-investigate allegations that Gee withheld from the Legal Aid Board details of his offshore assets and income when obtaining up to £1m in legal aid. Those with knowledge of the police investigation suggest that it has uncovered firm evidence that Gee did not disclose offshore bank accounts and companies.

This has raised the prospect that Gee could be prosecuted for deception with the backing of the Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine. Such a charge could get round the technical problem that charges of non-disclosure under the Legal Aid Act must be brought within six months. Irvine's backing could overrule any thought of another sympathy vote from Morris's successor, Lord Williams. A decision on whether to proceed is expected soon.

One problem could be that Gee has taken himself off to live with his wealthy American wife. He has continued to draw his £87,000 a year salary despite being suspended four years ago. Negotiations over his demand for an up to £500,000 pension pay-off have continued over several months.

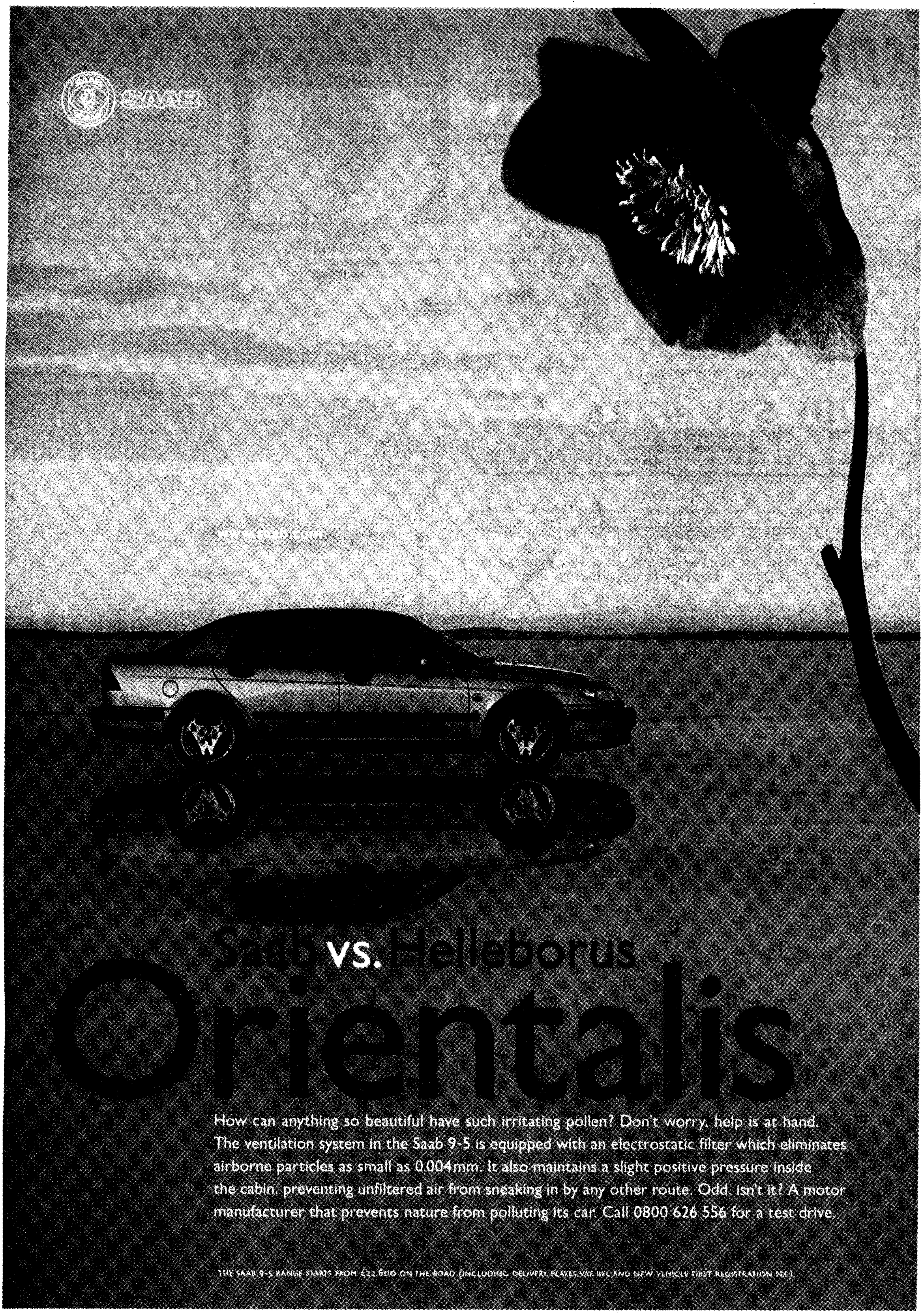
But even if Gee cannot be extradited or prosecuted the Yard evidence could be used to block or reduce any further salary or pension payments.

***'Slicker'***

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

MEGAMART
WILL THIS TAKEOVER MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE D'YOU THINK SIR ?
OPENING TIMES
NOT TO YOU IT WON'T HICKMAN ...
PHEW! THAT'S A RELIEF!
... BECAUSE YOU WON'T BE WORKING HERE ANYMORE !
PARKING
P45
47.


SAAB
Saab vs. Helleborus
Orientalis
How can anything so beautiful have such irritating pollen? Don't worry, help is at hand.
The ventilation system in the Saab 9-5 is equipped with an electrostatic filter which eliminates airborne particles as small as 0.004mm. It also maintains a slight positive pressure inside the cabin, preventing unfiltered air from sneaking in by any other route. Odd, isn't it? A motor manufacturer that prevents nature from polluting its car. Call 0800 626 556 for a test drive.
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# specialEYEs

## surveillance

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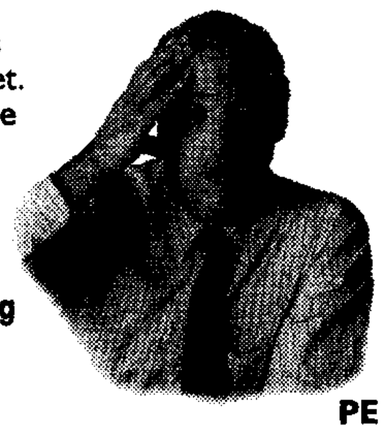

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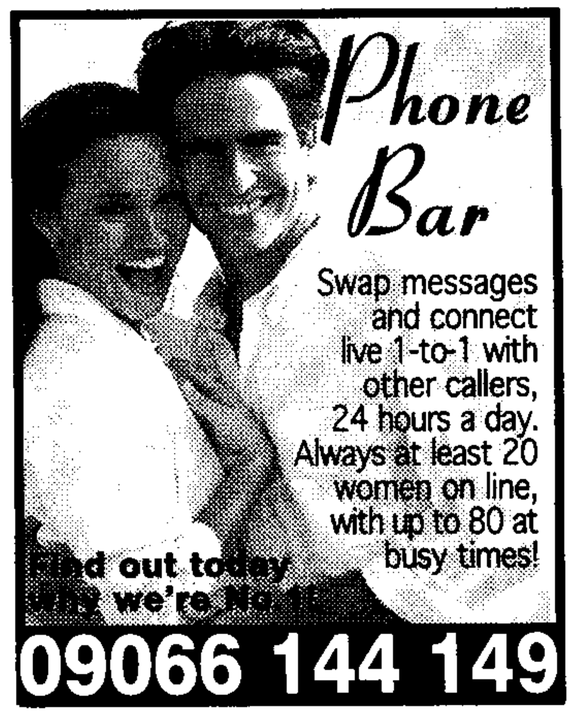
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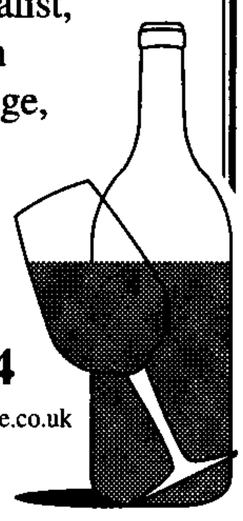

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**URGENT PLEA** – talented hard-worker attempting career change. Accepted for music degree, (voice), starting September. Cannot proceed due to financial obligations and absence of funding opportunities. Can you help? I need £15,000 p.a. for 3-4 years. Lloyds 30-13-01, 0721128. Box 0484 for more details.

**SEVERE EPILEPTIC** needs cash to buy house to escape neighbours from hell. Very suicidal. Please help. Co-op Bank 08-60-20, 03388059.

**DISABLED SINGLE MUM** with severely handicapped child, destitute, seeking help and donations. Barclays 20-80-14, 10608068.

**COMMITTED COUPLE** need new start and £10,000 – HSBC 40-47-86, 02136368. Thankyou.

**WELSH LAD** – sick of sheep, needs £5000 to relocate. Lloyds 30-96-00, 1996570.

**EPILEPSY COST ME** my job in 1992, then failed attempt at degree took savings. £4000 needed to control DEBTS. Many thanks. HBSC, 40-24-15, 31183079.

**GRADUATE** designer desperately seeking help for top up training to facilitate job – excellent potential. Grateful for any help, £10,000 needed. kayse60@hotmail.com. Barclays 20-42-58, 60284335.

**SMALL BUSINESS** trying to raise £300,000 for purpose built workshops. We are suffocating under the workload, normally eight to ten months in front of us. Can someone please help? The banks cannot see any further than the desks they sit behind. Will repay once the workshops are built. HALIFAX 11-04-25, 00457549.

**UNSECURED DEBTS** of £40,000 – need consolidation loan. Have good job but useless credit rating. Box 1184.

**YOUNG MATURE STUDENT** of interior design. Alone in U.K. needs help to complete course. Grateful for any assistance. Lloyds 30-92-83, 7022349.

**JUGGLE 2000** – the alternative look at the millennium. £10,000 required for project to succeed. Money being raised for Bury Unemployed Workers Centre. Britannia 303887077 freedom tours@wcom.net

**MEDICAL STUDENT** requires £10,000 to complete medical degree. Midland sort code 40-41-18. Account 11354639.

**IMPOVERISHED – DESPERATE** seeking £8000 for MBA First Direct 40-47-80, 51784692.

**RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC** – working two jobs, still needs £1,400 to finish life changing college course. Any help gratefully received. Lloyds 30-94-63, 0729911.

**EMBATTLED ARTISTS** group, still together! Community volunteers, desperately needs funds / sponsor(s) to save our Arts Centre. Details: 0171 622 1294. Lloyds 309210, 0011987.

**PLEASE HELP** £20,000 needed for an urgent operation. Barclays 20-27-48, 90588806.

**POST GRAD STUDENT** early music singer, desperately needing funds. Lloyds 30-97-41, 0490280.

**DESPERATE TO FINISH** therapy degree course – need £4000. Thankyou. Midland 40-04-07, 51045962.

**I HAD TO STOP FARMING** and teaching forestry when I developed rheumatoid arthritis and had two heart attacks. I long to be independent of the disability pension. I believe I could run my house as a guest house. It was derelict but I have nearly completed work. My savings have been used, family support has run out, DSS won't let me work at all and I'm not in a position to raise loans. Could anyone help towards the last £10,000? Sort Code: 30-98-69. Ac/No 0640898.

**HARD-WORKING** freelance writer urgently requires reliable laptop computer. 07771 577686.

**SEED NEEDED** for comedic feel-good TV series. Skip Marshall – 07775 915 447.

**DESPERATE** to clear debts and train as sign language interpreter. Thanks. Co-op 08-90-72, 22175751.

**SINKING FAST** – disabled man and wife need £5,000 to get belongings/house in order from council. Genuine. Thanks. Abbey National 09-01-26, 33327 56202.

**ART STUDENT** seeks funds to study abroad. Royal Bank of Scotland 83-49-40, 00632183. Thanks.

**PLEASE HELP** – 100,000k needed for final attempt at achieving ambitions. Very grateful RBS 16-32-45, 10046536.

**MAN, 56, REDUNDANT** third time – debts £9000 – desperate, grateful for any help. NatWest 60-10-39, 30435889.

**LAST ATTEMPT** to keep going. Pregnant, alone and bankrupt – humiliating to ask but help truly appreciated. Barclays 20-98-48, 80656666.

**MATURE STUDENT,** requires financial assistance desperately, large debts. Please help. Thank you. HSBC 40-28-24, 21292919.

**HEART ATTACK 1990**. Business collapsed owing £25,000. Still owe £2,000 but now have cancer. Can't leave 67 year old wife with this debt. Please give to Halifax 11-04-69 account 00163177.

**HARDWORKING FINE ART** student seeks financial help to aid study. Many thanks. Box 3884.

**HONEST GENTLEMAN**
won victory against
"political correctness",
lost out financially.
Help needed to finish
MA history.
THANK-YOU.
**Lloyds**
**30-99-64 0415716.**

## EYE ESCAPE

**RIO DE JANEIRO** – self-catering studio flat from £70 p.w. Details: E-mail andrew@britannia.com.br – or phone 0181 422 5102.

**CYCLING WITH BULLS.** Mtb cycling breaks in northern Spain. Rioja tasting, amazing terrain. From £195. Tel: 0118 932 8587 – www.cyclingwithbulls.com

**GREECE** – CYCLADES ISLANDS. Mykonos (direct flight), Paros, Naxos, Ios, Santorini plus a dozen quiet ones. SIMPLY SPECIAL... SIMPLY SIMON HOLIDAYS, ATOL2578 – 0171 373 1933.

**PERIOD HOLIDAY** cottage overlooking GLASTONBURY Abbey, Somerset. Sleeps 3 – £150 p.w. Phone 01234 211606 or e-mail: AbbeyGlast@aol.com for Brochure.

## EYE SKI

**CHALETS** in Courcheval, Val d'isere & La Tania (with crèche) mainly en-suite. Superb food & wine, LE SKI – 01484 548996. AITO, ATOL 2307.

## EYE FLY

**WORLDWIDE LOWEST** prices allegedly! Tel: 01942 603599 / 680268. Fax: 01942 670868. Agents ATOL holders.

**FLIGHT OPTIONS** – telephone booking service. Tel: 01432 851062, Fax: 01432 850722, HENRY ROGERS, ATOL 3793.

## EYE WORK

**TALENTED DISCREET** writer recently returned to UK after 8 years, needs to earn £25,000 fast. Anything considered. Box 0984.

## EYE EARN

**YOUR OWN INTERNET** shopping business. http://business.virigin.net /findout.more

**40 AND OVER??** Looking for better health and wealth? Phone 0114 230 9858 for free info pack.

**SUPERIOR** Business Opportunity – Tremendous free company support. No fees. 01702 334410.

## EYE CONTACT

**AMERICAN LADIES** seek British Gentlemen! Free details: Transatlantic, Box 2188-PE, San Pedro, California 90731 U.S.A.

**PLUMP PARTNERS** – National Dating Agency. If you are plump or prefer a plump partner – ring 01352 715909.

**ASIAN PARTNERS.** Suman Marriage Bureau, 0181 571 5145 – WWW.CUPID.demon.co.uk

**ATTRACTIVE EDUCATED LADIES** from U.K. and Overseas are seeking loving friends/partners. Write (Dept PE/9), P.O. Box 4, Goring-on-Thames, RG8 9DN.

**BEAUTIFUL THAI LADIES** – colour brochure SIAM INTRODUCTIONS (established 13 years) – 01689 860880. www.siam-intro.com

**RUSSIAN LADIES**
from Kazakstan
attractive, educated
(with traditional view of marriage)
**Phone:**
**01424 426185**

**HEDONISM PARTIES.** Adult Clubnights. Holidays. Attractive, un inhibited, funloving party animals. Couples, singles. S.A.E. Box 24405 London W5 5ZE. 09099 100185 (75p/min) – www.hedonism.org.uk

**ORIENTAL BEAUTIES** – respectable, irresistible, exotic, stunning – seek sincere gentlemen. Free colour brochure. T.P.I. SERVICES 01562 748600 (24 hrs). www.t-p-l-services.demon.co.uk

**DISCREET PENPALS** – The safe place for broad minded adults to exchange their secrets! 2x26p stamps to: EPPS, PO Box 36, Dartford, DA2 7ZU.

**ANGLO-ROMANIAN INTRODUCTIONS**
Educated
Romanian Ladies
seek educated Gentlemen.
For further information
**01646 672852.**

**THAI CONNECTIONS** – WAIA approved. Over 500 marriages. Free brochure: 01582 481725.

**CONTACT MAG** for adults: over 900 photos. APPROVAL copy from: MATCHMAKER, (S.76), Chorley, PR7 4BS. Or ring: 01257 480155 (24 hours).

**THE SINGLES CONNECTION**
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Women on line
only 25p/min
MESSAGE EXCHANGE
Box 30 WR10 2NR
**0906 216 8810**

**ATTACHED** seeking romance? Call David at LOVING LINKS 0171 460 7486 / 0171 937 7962. Recorded info line 0906 550 1361 (£1 per/min) or info by fax 09093 919293 (£1 per/min). Online www.lovinglinks.co.uk. Everything you imagine us to be.

**'ADULT CHATLINE'**
Girls 18+,
Women online,
60p/min, jcg, tn21 8xz,
**0906 361 1688**

**YOUNG LADIES** worldwide seek penpals, friends, lifemates. Free details, photos! HERMES, Box 610188/S, 10922 Berlin, Germany. Fax: 0049 30 25299775.

**EROTIC SCRIBES CLUB.** Penpals with a difference. Send SAE for details. PO Box 194 Ncle-on-Tyne, NE3 1FP.

**BEAUTIFUL RUSSIAN LADIES**
personal introductions
exclusive contacts.
OLGA EDWARDS,
PO Box 56, Hyde, Cheshire.
**0161 355 6841**
**(24 hrs).**

**ADDITIONS** – 'Attached'. Discreet Loving Agency for married people. 0181 905 3304, 0181 958 9657. Established 1992.

**ADULT PARTIES** and events. Nationwide and local contacts – 01582 750947, PO Box 2097, Luton, LU3 2ZT. www.club-aphrodite.com

# EYE LOVE

**WHY IS IT** so difficult to find the right woman? All I want, on my in-frequent visits to these shores (London) is a slim, large-bosomed bespectacled academic who... (that's enough requirements, Ed.) Box 2384.

**SINGLE, AVAILABLE** communicative soulmate sought by spirited Aquarium divorcee, 46, for great relationship. Thames Valley. Photo helpful. Box 2484.

**GOOD MAN (42),** seeks lovely soulmate (30s) to share tranquil country life on unspoiled Canary Island (Spain). House, cabin, pool, white beaches 20 mins. Exchange letter/photo. Box 0684.

**WELL-SPOKEN** ex high-powered lady, 54, would love to find gentleman companion non-smoker for good food and wine. Shropshire area/anywhere – mobile. Box 0784.

**ASSERTIVE HANDSOME** entrepreneur, M/40, seeks sleek, younger, unassertive, erotically enlightened F/partner – 07050 398943.

**CRAZY CHARLIE** needs Hairy Mary. If you are an attractive, intelligent, single and successful woman under 40 and can solve the riddle, then your catch awaits you. Box 0184.

**GRADUATE, 27,** seeks Mrs Robinson for erotic education and fun times. London. Box 1984.

**SENSUAL MAN,** 27, seeks sexy lady for intimate encounters. London/SE. Box 2084.

**DAWN FRENCH** on good days, Jo Brand on bad, (30), dark-skinned, loves: theatre, films, books (Will Self), cafes, Indi – Van Morrison. Hates: rap music, smoking, cats. Seeks attractive, single, sensitive, sensual soulmate. Box 1084.

**MALE DOCTOR,** 53, Indian, slim, attractive, lives central London, likes dining out, fun times – seeks lively lady similar age. Box 1284.

**PROFESSIONAL MALE** (GSOH) seeks female to exchange witty/suggestive E-mails jimbo@coolstreet.freeserve.co.uk

**TALL, ASSERTIVE,** successful, strict man, Bristol and London, 40 – seeks a naughty, younger woman to share the Autumn glow. I love eating out and eating in, nights on the town and weekends in the country and the rich tapestry of life. If you would like a fun relationship with some spice then please write to me with your telephone number to Box 0584.

**GENUINE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN**
kind, generous.
Wishes to meet
attractive, intriguing lady
for friendship and occasional
regular salacious liaisons of
mutual benefit
in North West area.
**Box 0884.**

**WELL-TRAVELLED** expat seeks uplifting spirit to join him in the tropical paradise of SE Asia. GSOH, no money worries or ties, this mid-40's expat enjoys travel, reading, socialising and is looking for a bright, friendly, loving lady to share all of life's experiences, hopefully for the longer-term. Age or family circumstances not important. Box 1384.

**AMIABLE ATTACHED GUY** 40's, solvent with gsoh, seeks attractive lady for daytime fun and frolics. NE.Yorks. Box 1584.

**RUGGEDLY HANDSOME** Sean Bean-type seeks Beatrice Dalle-type to experience all the fun, adventure, magic and mystery of life. Photograph please. Box 1684.

**AFFECTIONATE, INTELLECTUAL** male, 44, seeks a lady of warmth and passion, 30-45, for a meeting of minds and bodies. London/Home counties. Box 2284.

**UNATTACHED ENGLISH** guy, 27, tall, slim, fit, well presented, clean shaven, hardworking, single minded, tough yet sensitive and honest. Seeks intelligent, totally feminine, very sexy petite Lady, 30+, who'd enjoy the attention of a younger Man and perhaps the upper hand in an exciting, intimate "friendship'. Photo please. London/SE. Box 2684.

**WARM, SENSUOUS,** free-spirited elegant, F/Artist, 39, seeks intelligent, compassionate man – great sense of humour, for relationship. London. Box 4184.

**CARING, FRIENDLY,** professional M/40 WLTM similar attractive lady. Photo. A.L.A. London/South Coast. Box 2784.

**LEEDS MALE,** 46, writer. No money but intellectually/emotionally secure, offer tender loving future to very feminine woman under 40. Box 2884.

**BOHEMIAN ROMANTIC GENTLE MAN**
sought by gregarious
40 year old female.
Must love country living,
cosy cottage, clotted cream
and Cornish cliffs.
**Box 3284.**

**PROFESSIONAL MALE,** young 45, seeks assertive female. Manchester area. Box 4284.

**ACADEMIC MALE,** youthful fifties, attached, London based, passionate, sensitive, imaginative, kind-hearted, seeks simpatico woman for light lunches, laughter, friendship, intimacy. Box 3984.

**ATTACHED MALE,** early 50's, recently sold business, now bored – seeks attached lady for stimulating lunches, conversation, etc. Box 4084.

**MALE 50's SLIM,** tactile, discreet – desires slim lady to spoil / love/ fun? Photograph please. S.East. Box 4384.

**KISS YOU ALL OVER.** Passionate attractive male seeks absorbent, attached female for discreet fun. Box 2984.

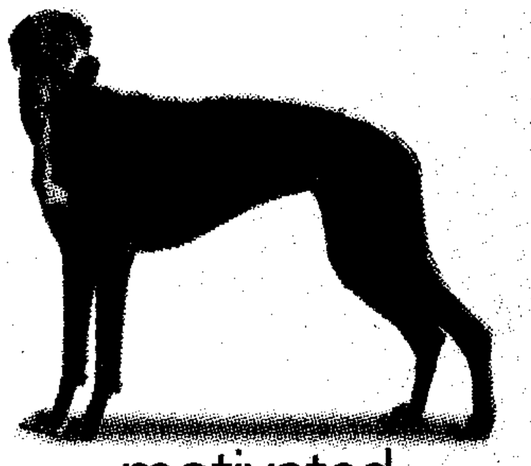
**REPLYING TO A PRIVATE EYE SMALLS BOX NUMBER? ADDRESS YOUR REPLY LIKE THIS:**

*Box Number ....*
*Private Eye Smalls*
*20 Orange Street*
*London WC2H 7ED*

# Spot the Open University student

inquisitive

ambitious



motivated

self-confident

Assuming that dogs share their owners' characteristics, which one most resembles an OU student? Are you sure? The fact is, at the Open University, normal stereotypes don't apply. You can't spot our students that easily.

One thing does mark them out though, and that's a determination to run their own lives. They want more out of life and that means they're hungry to learn. But they don't want second hand or second best learning - whether it's to improve their career prospects or because they just want to learn.

Today's Open University student chooses the OU because no-one else can deliver the range and quality of purpose-built courses if you want to study in your own free time. So, which one's the OU student? We'll tell you in a minute.

### TOP UNIVERSITY

The Open University is independently ranked among the top 15%* of all Britain's 90-odd universities for the quality of its teaching. Make no mistake, it's a real *university*. The difference is, you get to study at the highest level without having to give up work or family commitments.

### UNIQUE LEARNING METHOD

The Open University has developed its own unique and extremely successful method of study known as OU supported open learning - developed over the years to make sure that people studying in their own time can achieve academic success.

### 25% OF ALL UK MBAs†

Because of its expertise, the Open University is also fast becoming recognised as a leading provider of training for business and industry. 25% of the MBAs achieved in Britain each year come from the OU which has the biggest business school in Europe.

### 30,000 COMPANIES CHOOSE THE OU

Over 30,000 companies have paid for their staff to take OU courses, including BT, British Aerospace, IBM, Lloyds TSB, Nokia and Norwich Union. Employers and students like the fact that you can take a course without having to give up work. In fact 70% of OU students are working full-time. You can take one-off courses as well as building up to a diploma or degree.

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- Education
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- Psychology
- Management
- Mathematics
- Science
- Technology

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- MBA (Technology Management)
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- Doctorate in Education
- MA in Open and Distance Education
- MA/MSc in Social Sciences
- MSc in Science
- MSc in Development Management
- MSc in Environmental Decision Making
- MSc in Computing for Commerce and Industry
- MSc in Manufacturing: Management and Technology
- Research degrees

The Open University

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Ask anyone who's studied with the OU recently and they'll tell you that learning with the Open University is an experience you'll never forget. Not only do you get to challenge your mind, you end up with real personal achievements alongside your academic ones. The Open University learning experience is second to none. Ask for your free OU brochure today.

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☐ Tick here if you have contacted the OU in the past

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Tel.....Date of Birth ...../...../19 .....

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*PS they could all be OU students, which one are you?*

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